

Homesteading

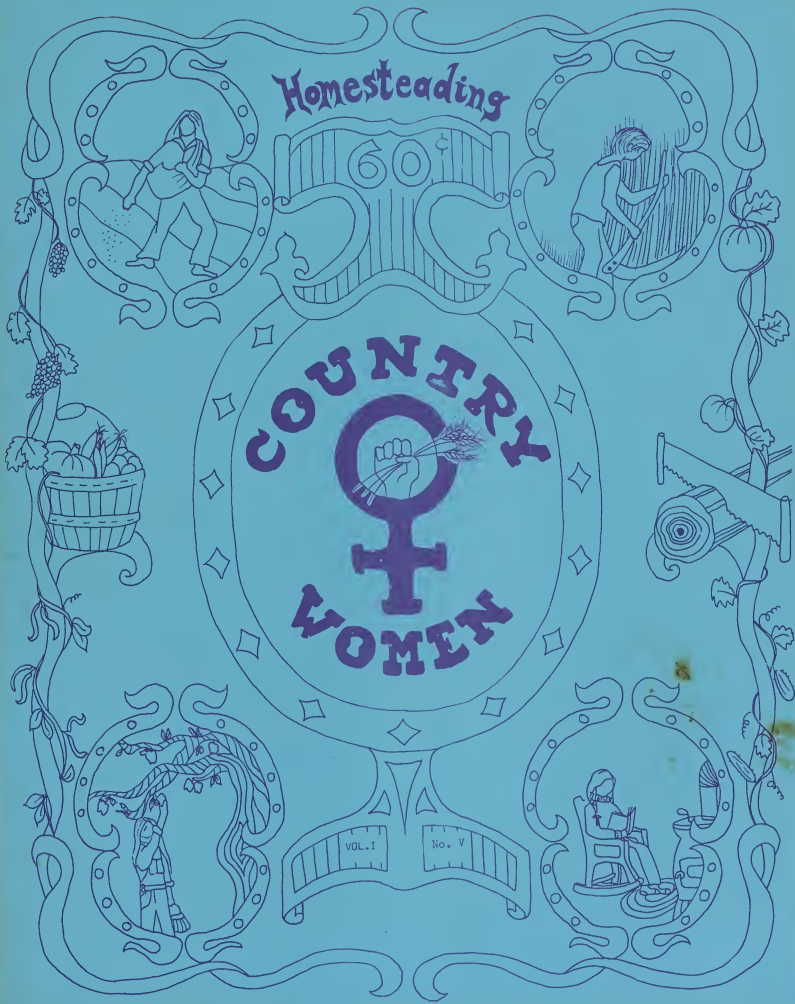
60

COUNTRY
WOMEN



VOL. I

No. V





Needed, one or two women wanting to learn live-stock raising and general farming. For present should have own money to live on. I have a small ranch, sheep, cattle, goats, and a horse. Joyce Bowles, Route 1, Box 7026, Vacaville, Calif. 95688. Phone: 707-448-5759.

Country woman - stuck in city with 4 year old child, wants to share a farm or country house with other women with children in hills or surrounding Santa Barbara area or San Diego area. Call and leave message at 1-213-949-4626 or write to: Bonnie Gratz, 13455 Bixler Ave., Downey, Ca.

The Garden of Joy Blues is a funky communal farm in the famous Ozark mountains and we want some more funky people, especially modelers, to come live here with us and bring some funky money also if you've got some. We are into crafts such as spinning, quilting, tanning furs and we raise goats like crazy and are out of soy sauce. Our truck's broke down, the chickens are laying real good, we chant OM before evening meals and have no electricity or running water but lots of forest and some pasture and three ponds. If you want to, you can give us a loom or come live here or even visit. Garden of Joy Blues, Star Route 3, Birch Tree, Missouri, 65458.



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To be a WOMAN in the country means:

To tune myself to the rhythms of sun, rain, stars and seasons and to flow with the cycles of myself;

To see fertility in everything around me--pine cones, eggs, lambs, seeds--and feel at one with myself as a life-giver;

To use my muscles and feel my strength grow as I rely on myself for my physical needs, walking, digging, chopping, carrying, building;

To pause frequently to see beauty, feel quietness and take a distant view, finding I can be more nurturing to myself and give more of peace to others;

To wear old clothes, practical clothes or no clothes, or to dress up in costumes, to feel like a person expressing her inside outwardly;

To plan each day anew--(no routines) because I can balance the weather, the seasonal work, my feelings and my needs into an utterly unique day of work and re-creation;

To experience again childhood wandering, aimless play, sitting quietly, running freely, climbing trees, exploring, wading the stream, playing in the mud, sucking on icicles, following paw prints in the snow;

To feel at home in the garden of the world--here where moss, clouds, planets, wind, wings and fur are affirmation that I am welcome.





LETTERS FROM

December 1977

We've been land locked for the last seven days (since returning) and this morning Saul was able to get our truck to the top of the mountain before the ground thawed out, so tomorrow is a mail run... hence...hello!

We arrived home safely with everything we started out with and something extra...an egg! It's the only one we've seen so far, though, and we've thought about cutting out pictures of eggs and hanging them in the coop, but we'll wait a few more days and see. Henry, the little rooster, is a real joy. He flies into your arms when you walk into the hen house; and the chickens seem to be really well adjusted, too. They dig to sit in their nest boxes and make productive sounds (but so far that's all they've made).

...The coffee freezes right in the coffee pot in the mornings...gets pretty cold out here...

January 1972

Snow is with us now. Her first official act upon becoming a member of the zoo was to completely cover herself in mud. I think she's happy...can't really see her. Took Tumbleweed out for a spin this morning...he's a changed critter. We have to do Snow's feet before we attempt a test drive. Visions of a colt. Ahhhhhhhh.

Rain, fog, mud, fire, candles, crochet hooks, grass, irises, tulips, snoozing, stretching, scratching, peace.

February 1972

The chickens are laying! some days 7, some days 2, but they are actually doing it!!

Two weeks for Pretty and Petunia! Any lambs yet? A black one?

Garden turned twice - Beautiful. Clover yard planted - also green house together with seed flats planted - Yea!

New loom - new shipment of yarn from Condon Mills. Good.

Rain,

Croaks.

Puddles.

Whinny.

Fog.

Silence.

March 1972

The last two days have been pretty lively out here - Pretty Girl gave us three bucklings(!) in the wee hours of Monday morning, and Petunia presented us with a buck and a doe(whew!) this morning at dawn. Pretty's babes are beautiful - one the spitting image of her - one red and husky - one very strong, red with charcoal spots and white top knot. We are, however, recomizing the reality and selling them next week to D.G.Thompson for \$5 apiece. We're attached to them already, but what's a person to do? Alfalfa (the black/white spotted wether of last year) is now a year old and it is ridiculous for us to have him...

April 1972

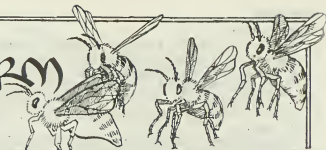
Carole and I are eagerly looking forward to the crafts' faire, although I'm so busy building a new world right now that I don't know how much time we're gonna have.

We have about 50% of our 3/4 acre garden in and up; the last frost wiped out what was left of the 59 tomatoes we had started and lost to the frost before that. We have about 30 tiny tomatoes started that have managed to keep warm and today I figured "Well, fuck it" and bought a flat of 6" cherry tomatoes. Onward. All the roots and leafy crops are almost in, and the cabbage family. Carole has planned the whole garden compatibly with the phase and sign of the moon and we're sticking to it pretty well except that once in awhile I freak out and have to plant something just for the high, and the moon be damned. No self control.

Our new fruit trees are getting their leaves and look so full of promise. Saul has built a magnificent beehive and our bees are coming Saturday. They'll be in the orchard, too.

We have 12 berry bushes planted and today got 36 more - puff, puff. When we're finished (finished??) it ought to be a pretty far out place. Is already. Good old Frog Pond. Been here 8 months now.

FROG POND FARM



I'm selling Tumbleweed and returning Snow for exactly the same reasons you are experiencing... I love Snow, but only if the day held an extra 2 or 3 hours would it be possible to do her justice. Maybe when the pace slackens a little around here, I'll try for another horse.

The chickens are doing great, by the way - 12 hens averaging 11 eggs a day. All right! I had been thinking about getting another flock of some super-fancies (Good Grief, Anon), but have come across some material lauding the virtues of Khaki-Campbell ducks as layers, so may do that - ah...

Keeping warm and dry and of course busy. Life goes bumbling and skipping along - sometimes I'm a newborn, sometimes a senior citizen. Happy, neurotic, sweaty, living and then some.

June 1972

Three a.m. this morning we were out covering our guinea pigs (3 now, folks keep laying them on us - I think we're known as "soft touches") and chickens. Rain! Oh Blessed Rain! The garden is all heavily mulched - looks like an ocean of straw - and this is just what we need. So far we've used about 10 bales!...I'm going to do some fodder experiments with sorghum, comfrey, and endive. I'll let you know what happens...

Erik and Ethel (Petunia's kids) were 3 months old yesterday and they are huge! We are now at 1 pint 10 oz. each, once daily, and will continue for another month. I'm really impressed with their height and general development. Just built a 8' x 10' buck barn and a 25' x 30' heavy duty pen...

A friend in Talmage laid a Phillipino Fighting Cock and Hen (Spangled White Hackle) on us. The hen has twice now laid 2 eggs in one day! (unless the rooster is really unusual). The cock is the most beautiful rooster I've ever seen...

later in June

Well, Carole and I are scratched on the crafts faire. Just ended up with too damn much to do - the old story.

Also in the "too damn much" department: more animals. I have a running list of "Next year we'll - now, and it's growing. To top it off, work seems more and more imminent, and I know that soon I'll be waking up in a rented room in Ukiah. Anyway, I want a couple of lambs to bottle-raise myself since really tame animals are what I get the most satisfaction from. The angora kid is really tempting, but to take on a horned kid would mean more pens and sheds and I just can't take on that. What a depressed letter! Sorry...

August 1972

Sorry that I've not written for so long, but we've been having more than our share (really?) of problems lately, and it's been too erratic to put anything on paper as everything changes, changes, changes. There is nothing new in that, at least.

Anyway, we've started the first steps of reconstruction - "Stay Flexible" and "Simplify". Petunia died July 26 - with no indication of illness (milking 14 lbs) until she went off her feed. Haven't gotten the autopsy report yet - don't know anything except that the vet said she must have had "it" for a long time. This, topped by severe water problems (garden gone) and other things, has brought us to the decision to sell our goats, or??

...I'm getting together everything that isn't nailed down around here to sell at a flea market and to antique stores. We are flat broke and my job still hasn't happened. With that money we hope to rent a shop in Potter Valley or thereabouts where Saul can make looms...

November 1972

Howdy! Here at last is the feed schedule for Erik and Ethel. I had a good time reminiscing over the milk records. Petunia's autopsy was screwed up, as we suspected, so we will never know what killed her...

Building more chicken coops, adding on to the barn, winter wood (and all that you've been into, too) has kept me from writing before... Sold Molly and Azazel to a fellow on the Eel River... Alfalfa is babysitting a lonely little doe kid of our neighbors, so that's resolved for now...

More people moving up here all the time. It's good but the transition city vibes are sometimes strange...

Voted today - listening to the returns. Disappointing at best, but that was to be expected I guess.

It's gonna be a wet one this winter. No snow yet, but much rain. I am determined to get to some weaving this winter!

continued

continued

January 1973

I also have little time for letters although I think of you often....

Swapped 16 Aracaunas today for 300 lbs. of bone meal and phosphorus. Really have to cut back. Have 7 Houdin/Banty roosters to get off, too...

Turns out I'm in the Real Estate Business. Friend of mine became a broker and I'm working for him, so if anyone is actually considering buying their own land...I'm here...

Very cold here. Well, around freezing. Had 12 inches of snow over that cold snap of a couple weeks ago...

Happy to hear Erik and Ethel are doing well...Really miss having goats around. A definite void, but good for now when there is so much to try and get together...I'm sure I'll be able to get back into it when we trim what's happening around here to something 2 people can handle. Carole is living with a neighbor now...

I tell you, if I ever get back into chickens again, it'll be either R.I. Reds or maybe even Leg-horns...

...And our pigeons are sitting on another clutch of eggs!! Wonder how it would be to cross a chicken with a pigeon? They're our most productive critter here now. Oh - and the ducks have started to lay, too. They're sure far out...

Well, that's all, folks. Write when you're able - and have a Very Happy New Year!!

Love ya - Anon

♀



Resources To Help you Homestead

Merck Veterinary Manual: If you are keeping animals and poultry, this is an invaluable book to have. It not only "covers" animal diseases (how to prevent them, how to diagnose and treat them) but has tables on the composition of feed-stuffs, a chapter on "social behavior among domestic animals", and extensive writing on nutrition. Almost 1700 pages long so that you can never exhaust it. The cost is \$11.25 from Omaha Vaccine Co. 2900 "O" Street, Omaha, Neb. 68107. Don't be discouraged by the technical jargon - read it with a dictionary nearby. "Creptitation", you'll discover, is just "a crackling noise"...

Absolutely indispensable to our gardening has been J.I. Rodale's How to Grow Vegetables and Fruits by the Organic Method. Another large and inexhaustible resource book, this one deals with the care of plants and trees. It tells you how to improve your soil, use mulches, control insects and diseases, prune and feed fruit trees, etc. Cost is about \$10 (we think - we bought ours years ago) and it's available from Rodale Press, Inc. 33 East Minor St., Emmaus, Pennsylvania 18049.

Rodale Press also puts out a monthly magazine called Organic Gardening and Farming. A year for \$5.85 from the same address. The emphasis is personal - accounts of the best way to grow sweet potatoes, new ideas on growing early corn or bigger tomatoes. Lately it's had articles on woodstove cooking and heating, managing a woodlot, and such. Also discusses the political grown of organic farm methods and ecology measures. Tells you how to feed your chickens healthily and what needs attention in orchard or garden each month.

The U.S. Government puts out a whole series of inexpensive pamphlets that are fairly useful. "Simple Plumbing Repairs for the Farm and Homestead" or "The Home Chicken Flock". Write to the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Govt. Printing Office, Washington 25, D.C., and get a list of their agricultural bulletins.

In California (and probably other states), there are agricultural extension service offices in rural towns and big cities. The people there are willing to help you with your farming problems or plans. They have booklets and pamphlets on all sorts of useful matters, can tell you who to write for barn plans or what kind of grazing you have on your land. Go see them!

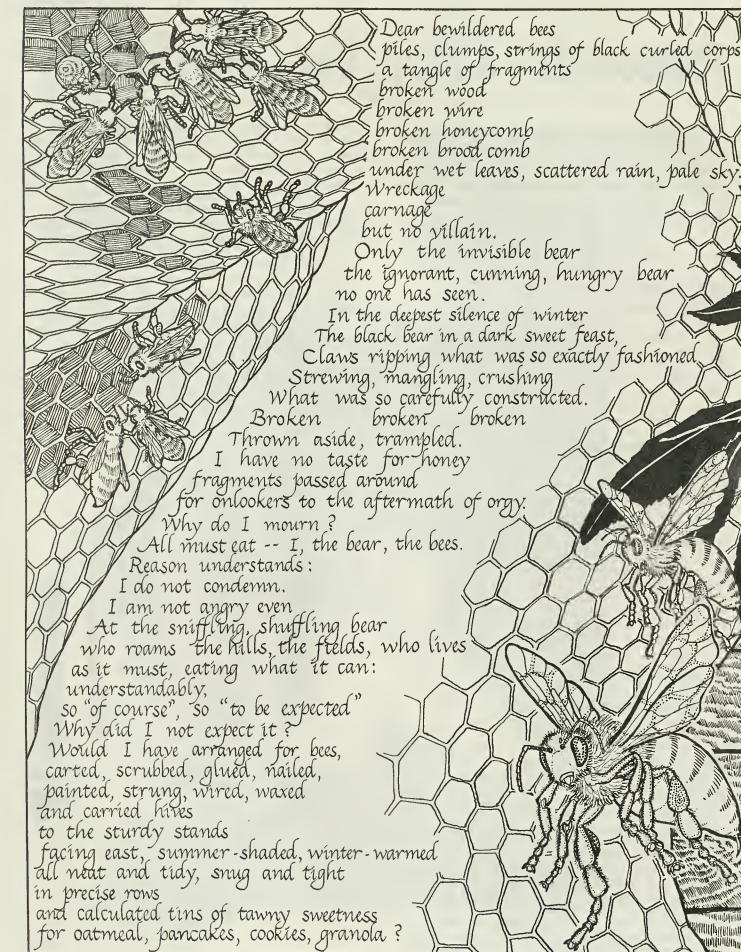
For some hard-to-find tools (scythes, crosscut saws, froes), some overpriced things you can get from Sears (chicken waterers, milk pails), and some good books and old-timey household items, get the "Mother's Truck Store Catalogue". 25¢ from Box 75, Unionville, Ohio 44088.

Supplies for Goat and Sheep Owners (from dehorning irons and goat collars to butter molds)

get the free American Supply House Catalogue No. 73. Am. Supply House, P.O. Box 1114, Columbia, Missouri 65201. They have a very fine stainless steel milk pail - \$15.95 but indestructible!

To end this, a really excellent "small stock journal" which comes out monthly and is full of practical information on homesteading. It's called Countryside and Small Stock Journal. \$5.00 a year from 318 Waterloo Rd, Marshall, Wisconsin. 53559. It's divided into three sections - Countryside ("Can you Make Money on 20 Acres?" - "Homestead Carpenter"); Dairy Goat Guide ("Tetanus, Horses, and Goats" "Pointers on Kids" "Abscesses"); and Rabbit World ("Raising Rabbits Organically" "Best Meat in the Pot"). It's written by a lot of different people - nice photographs and drawings - and the Goat Guide Editor is a woman! Reading it is like a long, rambling conversation with country friends. ♡





Dear bewildered bees
piles, clumps, strings of black curled corpses
a tangle of fragments
broken wood
broken wire
broken honeycomb
broken brood comb
under wet leaves, scattered rain, pale sky.
Wreckage
carnage
but no villain.

Only the invisible bear
the ignorant, cunning, hungry bear
no one has seen.

In the deepest silence of winter
The black bear in a dark sweet feast,
Claws ripping what was so exactly fashioned
Strewing, mangling, crushing
What was so carefully constructed.

Broken broken broken

Thrown aside, trampled.

I have no taste for honey
fragments passed around
for onlookers to the aftermath of orgy.

Why do I mourn?

All must eat -- I, the bear, the bees.

Reason understands:

I do not condemn.

I am not angry even

At the sniffing, shuffling bear
who roams the hills, the fields, who lives
as it must, eating what it can:
understandably,

so "of course", so "to be expected"

Why did I not expect it?

Would I have arranged for bees,
carted, scrubbed, glued, nailed,
painted, strung, wired, waxed
and carried hives
to the sturdy stands
facing east, summer-shaded, winter-warmed
all neat and tidy, snug and tight
in precise rows
and calculated tins of tawny sweetness
for oatmeal, pancakes, cookies, granola?

Elegy for bees

What was I thinking of ?

Not this

these pitiful limp clusters of bedraggled bees
clinging listlessly to overturned boxes,
pale knots of slow motion wings.

I feel I hear them keening

For the lost world

of busyness as usual:

all sunshine, work and swelling eggs
and scents and nectar.

Not this

roof gone, vacant and stained by rain
the aimless crawling, slower, slower
to where ? for what ?

No heart for queen or honey.

Now I cannot help you

though I brought you here

all feisty, full of sting and flight.

I bundled up like spacemen to protect myself
from your fierce loyalty.

You never understood my banging

On your hive and tried to hurt me.

And now we are both wounded,
both defenseless.

But I chose -- all ignorant and confident
to raise some bees for money.

Bears raze bees for honey, too.

... The honey.

No my grief is not for that.

It is the bees

the beautiful determined bees

the sacrifice to me and bears.

One Week from a Homestead Journal



Friday

A gray day damp and windy; arms aching and back tired, the truck full of manure and another load to get. I drive along enmeshed in the silence thinking of plants, watching them grow in my mind as they soon will in this manure. Feeling caught up in this fertility ritual, spring planting, each shovel full of manure a beginning link in a chain of causality that keeps the earth flourishing. I am full of emotions, joyous and sad simultaneously, awed by the potency of what I am doing, this participating in creating life. I think of fences and planting schedules, the flowers that this year I will grow, a new herb garden to replace the one killed by frost. I become acquisitive, cannot stop at one manure load or two but now want ten. I want to see a tropic rain forest lushness springing from this black alluvial coastal soil. My arms ache and are stiff but even now I'm thinking of how they will not ache on the tenth load and how the silence of my aloneness, peopled only by wind and the ocean, replenishes and restores me. I have lost the power of speech, feel myself some mute nascent being sprouting roots in the soil.

I finished unloading the manure, tired, thinking about lunch and whether or not to go back for another load this afternoon. Uncertain about my motives, I don't know if I should go today because there's manure there and there may not be tomorrow (the girl said "we can't hardly keep up with the demand", smiling at the joke of it) or if I am just macho-ly pushing myself too hard again. I think I'll see how I feel after lunch, knowing somehow I will end up going today and that I'll be both exhausted and satisfied tonight. I remember that it has taken me two weeks of thinking about it to get this load. Shyness, feeling funny about going there a woman alone, wanting help and companionship. Finally I go, forcing myself, and find how easy it is. The only person at the horse farm is a young woman working there cleaning barns. And I feel the pleasure of a hard piece of work done, the goodness of muscles aching. I try to remind myself that it is always so much easier than my fears--to learn to leap the two weeks of contemplating.

Boots, levi jacket, truck--the props and costumes of my fantasies. I remember how my first boots felt. Symbols of my countryness, I wore them even on hard city pavements. I watched each step I took for the pleasure of seeing work boot prints in the mud. I kicked trees, forged through wet leaves, stamped and pounded, all to

test the new-found power of feet ready for work. Then came the levi jacket and finally, by the time the jacket was looking faded and well-used, the truck: an old red '56 Ford. The first week I had the truck I found myself on the back of the land with truck, jacket and boots, picking up old fence posts, found myself transformed into every cowhand I had ever seen in a movie. I drove the truck through the field with keen eyes and stern jaw, "riding fence". I worked my small, thin, "wiry" body to exhaustion without even noticing it--I was so enraptured with the theater of being a rancher. It was then that I began to realize how the country fed my fantasies; my life and the theater of my dreams had become one. I did not know if I really wanted to be hauling fence posts, if I really wanted sheep, or if I was feeding some long buried need for an identity, a self image I could love. I feel my motives all confused and twisted now. I am uncertain of why I do things. I try to stay in the present, to do what I do because it is bringing me pleasure or satisfaction now, but still I never know where the bigger goals are coming from. I find myself one day with a six goat herd, taking an hour to milk, and milk being fed to cats, there is so much, and I realize my fantasies and my reality have become so confused, so intertwined, that I don't know what I really want. The back to the land movement has done this on a bigger scale--we repeat to each other the dream vision of the country homestead, only rarely sharing the reality of what we love most and what we don't enjoy at all.

I have become really involved in my garden through the years and I spend much time just being with the plants--noticing their growth, their diseases; trying experiments with manure, lime, woodash; reading about pollination and hybridization. The plants are a special world to me and I value what I learn from being with them. I become so involved that I can hardly bear to pick the cabbage, waiting to see how large it will get and marveling at its rose-like beauty. Christopher waters, the plants survive and bear fruit. But he does not grow with them as I do and they do not grow for him as they do for me. Separating fantasy from reality is discovering what parts of country life are as special to me as my garden. I do not feel this way about all parts of homesteading.

I take this insane delight in just being in

the country sometimes. As if, by some wonderful accident, I will never grow up to city job and suburban home. I laugh with sheer pleasure at splashing through mud puddles in my rubber boots, hiding in a secret house beneath low hanging cypresses. I will never have to lose my childhood wonder.

Work never stops in the country; it comes in cycles, varies in intensity with the seasons, but it never stops. I have just realized that I will probably be running out of wood for the rest of my life! For three years now I've been waiting for the winter rains to come so I could sit still doing "nothing" and each winter has passed without stopping my work. In this, the wettest winter in 60 years, I can only remember a few days when I was kept in by rain: now that my life is bound up in the land it does not stop with the weather. Rain means rubber boots, new grass, water in the well next August. I welcome it and go on doing what I do. Yet, sometimes I get worn down and overwhelmed by the endlessness of country work and I begin to be angry and resentful at the animals or the garden--in those times I have lost touch with the meaning of country life.

Sunday

Yesterday I went out to feed the goats, electric energy all around--the cool air, powerful wind, steady roar of the ocean. I found the plastic from the goat house roof torn loose and whipping about in the wind. After caring for goats, I spent the next hour fighting to pin down the plastic and keep it there before it ripped to shreds, using staple gun, batting and my body, all somewhat precariously perched on the steeply pitched wet roof. I hoped, at least, to save the plastic until I could get some roll roofing to replace it, feeling worried about the goats getting wet and cold and a nagging tension about how to juggle next week's money to include roll roofing. I cursed myself for ever using plastic in the first place, for not doing it "right" once and for all. Always that decision whether to build well or cheaply. Too often, I have opted for cheaply, still seeing myself as an eternal transient, only to find myself still here three years later and frustrated from patching old mistakes. I worry about this and my sheep fencing: if I use saplings, they will only last 5-15 years, if I buy heartweed, it will cost an extra \$300 that I don't have. Fifteen years feels like a lifetime to me now. Yet I also know how much I love this land and how I want to leave it to someone who will care for it as I do, if I ever leave. Posts that stand for fifteen years will not make a farm for anyone else. To not believe in this land as a farm is to accept the inevitability of encroaching vacation land and environmental destruction. I love this land so intensely I can cry with the thought of it. I feel so deeply bound to it that I am one of the plants, another of its living things. I can hardly bear to reveal my feelings; I have found my center, this land speaks my secret name.

And always that conflict--how to treat it well, how to build like our ancestors to last forever

(or like the Indians to leave no trace?). Where to get the money, and the time after working for money, and the energy to live up to my loving, to not betray this land with my carelessness or expediency?

Wednesday

This morning sun breaking through clouds, reviving me. Deer have gotten into the garden through the broken gate and eaten the remains of the winter garden, though fortunately not the strawberries or the lettuce. I find that I don't mind, am in fact relieved. For a week now I've been hesitating, needing to spade and turn that section yet unable to tear up living plants. Now the deer have enjoyed them and I feel glad; the chard has fulfilled its purpose and I can begin to work the soil for spring. I planted onions and snow peas today, transplanted cauliflower seedlings, began digging manure into the ground. I feel uplifted by the work, the sun, the stink of sweat, the neat rows emerging in the soil. My orderly soul feels satisfied: planting is the beginning of a perfect cycle.

This afternoon the Hams began teaching me how to graft fruit trees--the careful joining of life with life: it seemed to have a metaphorical meaning. And I loved, more even than the gaining of a skill I care about, the learning from two old men who have so much to teach me. I loved the audacity of setting grafts at 83 that will not bear fruit for years: the total involvement in a process they love. Those trees will stand and live; I doubt whether they even stop to wonder if they'll pick the fruit. I want to live my life with that kind of harmony and purpose. I want to be planting seeds on the day I die.

Thursday

A beautiful crisp morning, I wake up early, almost dawn, feeling exhausted and tense. Too many days of putting out too much--long hours of hard work, surrounded by people who've come to visit or work on the magazine, nights of meetings. I feel drained, needing rest from commitments and outward energy. Yet today I have to work all afternoon at the weaving co-op; I promised to help Ellen tune her car, to lend the truck to Hoernsra. I feel the need to replenish myself with the silence. I have nothing to give out today except a hollow copy of myself.

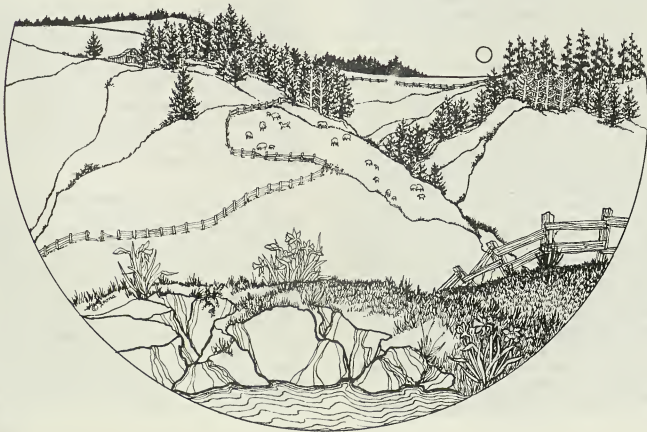
Friday

I finally buried the septic tank and the drainage lines today, almost a year since I finished the plumbing, a year of tripping over the ditch without even noticing it. There is so much I get used to rather than fix. It feels good to have so much energy now. I find my sense of orderliness is reasserting itself really strongly; I want to see the house and the land take the shapes of my visions. I feel intense pleasure and satisfaction at accomplishing some part of what I have planned, at finishing what I have begun. I worked until I was shaking with fatigue today, breaking ground with a mattock and shoveling dirt. Yet, it feels so good to see the ground smooth and flat, no hole, no ditch. Already I am envisioning flowers. continued

continued

During breaks in the digging, I kept wandering out to the back meadow today: looking at the land, measuring it into fields with my eye; counting the fence posts cut last fall, checking their size, the amount of heartwood; looking at the piles of old posts down near the creek, guessing at their numbers, feeling with my tired muscles the work of hauling them up the hillside. Back and forth all day between the work of the sceptic tank and the dream of the sheep ranch. For days I have been measuring and calculating. Off and on each day I struggle with the decision, play with the fantasies. I have to decide soon, before the ground gets too hard whether or not to have post holes dug, whether and how much land to fence. Partly, I am afraid of the cost. Ten acres of fencing will cost me \$280, five months of saving at my current rate, and still I will have only bare grass and no sheep. So funny how little \$280 really is, how monumental it feels to me now. But somehow I know that almost unconsciously I have already decided to borrow the money, that the security of beginning to develop the land into a productive farm is greater than the security of that little money saved and banked. Even beyond the problem of the money, I still hesitate in the face of the reality of the work. I think of stripping, soaking and setting 220 posts, think of hauling, stretching and nailing eight rolls of fencing, each 330 feet long and 100 pounds heavy. I think of what all that

means to me, basically alone, wondering whether I will day after day sustain the dream through the reality of the work. Will I be able to find friends to help with the hauling and stretching of the wire, the work I cannot do alone? I have for two years now thought of these sheep—the crimp and color of their fleeces, the yarn I have spun and will spin, the dye colors latent in my field of daffodils. I sit and watch the neighbor's sheep, loving their ungainly movements and the expressions on their faces, feeling about sheep as I don't about any other animal. I drive past fields of sheep and a picture of my back meadow flashes before me. For so long I've dreamed about doing this, while slowly other bits of the vision have come about—goat pen and barn built, garden grown, orchard pruned and picked, sheep fence posts cut, stacked and waiting, a silent reminder. Yet still I hesitate, worry, plan, calculate. I cannot afford to have animals just for the pleasure; I must do this big enough and well enough that they will pay for themselves and more. Can I really do this? Do I have the energy day after day to pound dirt into post holes, stretch 100 pound rolls of wire, dig a water hole, day after day, long before I ever see a sheep? How much do I want to be what I think I want to be? Do I have the courage or the craziness to do this alone? Each day, I dream and worry, plot and plan...soon I have to decide, stop hesitating at the edge of the orchard and commit myself. ♀



fencing

Fencing, like all of farming, is a continual process. Not only do you constantly have to fence for new animals, new fruit trees, bigger garden space, or different use of existing pens and pastures, but fences seem to have a life cycle of their own. Fences fall down, are broken through, pushed over or apart. They sag, are battered down, run down and dented in by pickup trucks sliding in the mud. Fence wires snap, ease out of their U nails, rust, spring loose and coil themselves up around the nearest post. Posts age--sometimes amazingly fast--and lean, wobble, rot, corrode, or just plain fall down. You enter the life-cycle of fences as creator or restorer. With a lot of energy and materials, you can create a marvel of straight, taut wire and sturdy vertical posts. With a lot of ingenuity and determination, you can patch, renaill, restretch and sustain old meandering farm fences. Your fences will grow and change with you, your farm, your animals...

Our fencing experiences began with some barbed wire fiascoes (see sheep raising, C W #3) and progressed to woven wire and wooden posts. We (three women brand new to country farm) fenced an area for our half-dozen sheep, using a brand new roll of "heavy field fencing" from Sears and our brand new fencing tools. We had a mixture of old redwood posts and fir poles, and a logical idea of how to proceed. We learned as we worked and learned more after we'd finished. The first part of our fence is a stretch that boasts nine foot high posts (mostly unsoaked fir poles of various diameters) which are set one foot in the ground and lean at interesting angles to one another. Wandering from post to post is 36 inch field fencing, so that the effect (impossible to convey in words) looks something like this:



Joined to this is another section which is creative fencing at its best. Odd shaped pieces of variously-sized chicken wire are laced by fragments of barbed wire, old rusty fencing, and some bits of baling wire. There are hastily thrown up boards ("half the sheep are out!") that

careen from one post not quite to the next and have an extra piece nailed on to make those last few inches. One corner is secured with a large scrap of plywood. The whole effect of this part of the fence is that it is trying to--and about to--rejoin the forest...or perhaps create a new dump location. Next comes a fairly respectable line of field fencing that is nailed tree to tree with a few old set-in posts where necessary. The last line we did has posts set in every twelve feet--and the posts are only a foot or so above the top wire and sunk well into the ground. The wire is fairly tight and keeps our goats out of the sheep and vice-versa.

This first experiment--experience in fencing taught us a lot of basics. For the ewe bothered by relative proportions or enamored of orderliness, the fence we created is a continual shock. For anyone interested in proper fencing technique, it's a how-not-to lesson complete and eloquent. For the sheep who live within its confines, it's a fence!

Most fences consist of vertical posts placed every so many feet and horizontal fencing or filler of some sort. The posts may be metal, wood, or even concrete. Between them you can use woven wire, plain, barbed or electric wire, rails, poles, boards--or any combination of these and other materials. Most of our fencing has been woven wire with wooden posts, though we've experimented with almost every other type. The principles are the same for most materials: posts should be strong and well-set; fencing should be tightly stretched and nailed on; materials should be the best you can get. The art of building a good fence isn't difficult and doesn't require a great deal of physical strength. It does take a lot of time and energy--so you should make the best initial effort (materials and construction) possible.

Basically, a homestead/farm fence is for keeping various creatures in or out of various areas. The height, strength, and spacing of a fence is determined by the creatures it proposes to control. The life expectancy of a fence is subject to the quality of materials and work that goes into its making, and the wear it takes from weather and animals. A good permanent fence will last indefinitely. A poorly-built or temporary fence may straggle on a few years.

Posts and Postholes: The first step in fencing is to plan what type and how much fencing you need and where the lines will run. If you need to fence a large area, you might consider using metal posts. They are easily set, not too expensive (\$1 to \$2 each), and last fairly long. You will need wooden

continued

posts for corner posts and between every three to five metal ones. Early spring, while the ground is still soft, is a good time to begin work—you can get together fencing and tools, clear brush away from your lines, and mark post places. You can cut or split out or buy posts and soak them in advance. The closer you space your posts, the more strength your fence will have. For small pens and pastures where animals will give the fence constant wear, we space posts 8 feet apart. Larger areas mean less concentrated wear, so posts are 11 or 12 feet apart. Our garden fence which is not pushed, rubbed against or stood on by animals has posts every 15 feet or so. Each post should be sunk in the ground 1/3 its height. If you want 4 feet of fencing above ground, use 6 foot posts and sink them 2 feet. Corner and gate posts should be sunk deeper and should be heavier posts. Each posthole should be at least 4 inches bigger in diameter than the post.

Wood posts can usually be bought in lengths of 5½ to 8 feet and in diameters of 2½ to 6 inches or larger.

Posts 5" or larger in diameter are generally used for anchor posts (gate, corner, end, and braced-line posts). Line posts for straight, open field woven wire fences are sometimes as small as 2½" in diameter, but a minimum diameter of 3½" is recommended. Four or five inch posts should be used for barn lots, corrals, and other confined areas and in sandy and wet soils." (U.S. Dept. of Agric. Farmer's Bulletin #2247).

The type of wood you use for fence posts is critical. Hardwood and especially the heartwood of hardwoods and certain softwoods (redwood for example) will last much longer than saplings, sapwood or softwood. For comparison: (posts mostly of heartwood) red cedar should last 15-25 years; white oak 5-10 years; southern pine or willow, 2-7 years. "Untreated sapwood" of any wood species will usually rot in 1-3 years. (Farmers Bulletin #2247). The best post is the one least likely to rot above or below ground. You can greatly lengthen the life of any post by treating it with wood preservative. Soaking the part of the post that will be in the ground is the best home method (you can buy commercially pressure-treated posts). Use creosote, Penta, (mix 1 part Penta to 10 parts used or cheap motor oil or diesel fuel) or any other good preservative. A 55 gallon oil drum half-full of Penta mix will hold 10 or so good-sized posts. For smaller projects, use an old honey tin or small garbage can. The absolute minimum soaking time is 20 minutes. We try to soak each post at least overnight—and our friends soak theirs each a week. Soaking is the best method because it allows the preservative to fully penetrate the wood. Warning the preservative (even sun warmth helps) speeds up the process and allows maximum penetration. If you paint the posts (not as good), use a soft wide paint brush, warm preservative, and keep applying coats until the wood won't absorb any more.

These preservatives are poisonous so keep cans, buckets and brushes away from children. If you've been working with them, wash your hands well before smoking or eating.

Be careful not to let rain water get into your soaking bucket. The water will sink to the bottom and your post ends will be sitting in water, not preservative.

Digging postholes can be done by hand or, for big projects, by machine. A tractor can be fitted with an auger for digging the holes and do as many as 200 holes (loose soil, open level land and good conditions) in two hours. There is a gas-run auger that you can rent. But most of your work will probably be done by hand with a posthole digger or hand auger. The use of these tools is described in the Farm Tools article.

Setting Posts: You can dig your postholes in the fall and set the posts in the spring. It's fairly light work to clean out an already-dug hole. There are lots of methods of setting posts, extra time tamping them in will give your posts long-lasting strength. Tamping is the packing of earth in around the post. It is best done with a heavy pole or pipe whose weight will join with your strength to pack the earth. We use a 5' piece of old iron pipe with a cap on one end. The pipe has more weight than a shovel handle which we used to use, won't give you slivers and its small diameter lets you tamp really tightly. First put a little gravel or sand in the hole to create good drainage. Set your post in and straighten it by eye or using a carpenter's level. When you have some earth packed in, recheck the post for straightness. We usually mix gravel and earth, putting in 2 or 3 inch layers of each (earth first gravel next) and tamping well. The more care you give to tamping the earth solidly, the stronger your post will be. Another method is to fill all but the top 5-6" with sand, put in a layer of gravel and tamp well. This takes more physical strength and a much heavier tamper but is said to last longest and be stronger. After tamping this, fill to the top with sand and pack again. Our gravel-dirt method also works if your soil is muddy.

Setting posts is a nice two person job. Take turns tamping and putting in the dirt, gravel or sand. The rhythmic circling of the tamper, the touching of earth, metal, stone and wood can become a beautiful ritual. Another part of farm work that blends music and purposeful work.

Choosing Wire: Woven wire fencing comes in many heights, weights and spacing. Heights range from 36" (high enough for sheep and some goats; you can run a strand or two of barbed or plain wire along the top for cattle and horses or a strand of barbed wire along the bottom for pigs) to 6' high (poultry and garden fencing). Weights are light, medium, heavy and extra-heavy. Weights refer to the thickness and coating of the wire. We bought lightweight fencing for a kid pen once. As soon as our kids were a few months old, they began to break the wires by leaning and jumping on them. Heavyweight will last well and extragalvanized heavyweight lasts best. The spacing of fencing is talked about horizontally (the line wires) and vertically (stay spacing). Top and bottom line wires are usually heavier than those in between (which makes for a stretching problem, read on). General purpose fencing is available

with line wires spaces as closely as 1 or 1½ inches at the bottom and 4-5" top. This will keep chickens and rabbits out of your garden--or keep chickens in a yard and safe from predators. Stay spacing is 6" (this is much stronger and more durable than "chicken wire" netting).

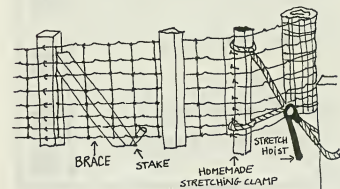
We've used field fencing for goats and sheep, the stay spacing is 12" so that animals don't get their heads caught (lambs and kids are especially prone to head-catching). More closely spaced fencing (6" or even 2" square) will keep dogs out of your pens but you have to be aware of hooves and heads getting stuck. If you have long-eared goats, avoid using barbed wire along the tops of fences and never use barbed wire where goats can tear their udders.

Barbed wire note: we have almost nothing good to say for it. It's difficult to put up, dangerous once it's up, and a nightmare to take down. It does discourage people from climbing over your fences--and dogs from digging under your fences. One tip if you're removing barbed wire: take a short length of stick and wrap long pieces of wire carefully around it. Secure each end of wire well. This snaggy mass can be more easily handled than coils can.

A rollof field-type fencing is usually 330 ft. and costs anywhere from \$20 to \$50. Taller fencing comes in 150 ft. rolls. Do some price comparison before you buy--prices for basically the same product can vary a lot.

Fence Stretching: The tightest possible fence is one stretched by a tractor or truck with low gears or range. If you're fencing a large, open area you should try to use a truck. If you're working in a tighter space or in wooded areas, the following tool will help you too: take a board the height of your fence and drive nails in so that they will run down the jointing of the stay spaces and line wires. Attach a chain or heavy rope about a half foot from top and bottom and attach the other end to your tractor, truck or stretcher. You may have to adjust the top and bottom nails until you get a completely even tension that doesn't strain the wire in one place. Commercially available is a "wood-steel stretching clamp" that does the same job.

It helps to brace your posts with a diagonal pole when you stretch the wire.



If you are stretching fence by hand, you should use a stretcher-hoist or a ratchet-action stretcher. These tools cost about \$10 and are indispensable if you have a lot of small areas to fence. If you buy your fencing from Sears, you can "borrow" a hoist, posthole digger, clamp and fence pliers for a returnable deposit.

Attach one end of the stretcher to your stretching clamp and the other end to a tree (hopefully) or a stationary truck or if nothing else is available, the next fence post (brace it well, the strain really weakens your post). Use a long rope or chain for maximum leverage. Sometimes you can stretch two or more sections at once if you can get enough pull to make them all tight. If you're using the stretcher type, two people can pull at once. The stretcher automatically locks as you gain tension. When you nail the fencing on (use heavy galvanized fencing staples) have someone brace the post from the opposite side (again, to save strain on the post). Always toenail in staples at a slight angle to keep them from splitting with the grain of the wood and to give them maximum strength.

Metal posts have special clips to attach the wire with.

Retightening and Bracing: A woven wire fence that has begun to sag because it wasn't stretched tightly enough or because the posts are loose can be saved! You can place sapling poles as vertical braces every few yards. Notch the poles and push the top wire into the notch. If you have goats, running poles or boards along the tops of fences protects the fence from a lot of wear, especially in areas where your animals frequently jump up on the fence--near shelters, gates, feeding places. A strand or two of plain wire stretched above the fencing will take a lot of the leaning of horses off the fence. Sears makes something called a "fence and wire tightener", a little gadget that twists the wire tight again--a box of 105 costs \$8.25. They are put on with a carpenter's brace.

Miscellany: Cutting the top of a fence post at a slight angle keeps the rain from setting on and soaking into (and rotting) the post.

If you're using softwood poles you might consider treating the entire pole to preserve it as long as possible.

If you're digging postholes in really hard (summer-baked) soil try putting a shovel full of mulch over the spot and keeping it damp for a week or two--it should soften the ground.

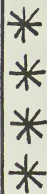
Consider putting in extra-tall posts in case you might someday want a taller fence around that area.

Brace corner posts and gate posts.

Don't make circular pastures. They seem very organic--but unless your posts are in extra well they will loosen because you have to pull each one at an angle.

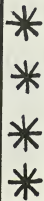
Put your fence on the inside of the posts except when you go around a corner post. The posts will then take the pressure of animals leaning and the staples won't be pulled out. If you put the fence on the inside of the corner, though, it will pull loose.

To move a heavy roll of fencing: tip it slightly and roll it on its edge.



Dear Country Women,

I will look forward to receiving your magazine -
and will dream of the day when I might get away
and catch up on my reading - thinking - dig in the soil -
pick an apple from the tree and just not have to go anywhere -
for a little while.



Day of Rest

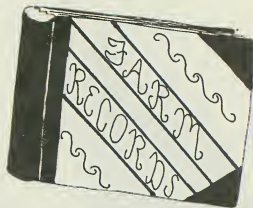
Last night, falling into bed too exhausted to move, we decided we needed a day of rest. We've been working too hard - if that's possible. Yes, it is possible in spite of our endless energy for this place - our land, our vision-reality, our 40 acres of old farm struggling to be reborn through our hands, bodies, dreams and sheer determination. Too tired is working 11 and 12 hours a day with a 5 minute sandwich grabbed halfway through and a 10 minute cup of coffee before evening chores. Too tired is literally never stopping. Is going out to creep feed the lambs, noticing it's time to give the goat kids their bottles, is remembering we need wood in the house to start the fire to heat the bottles, is taking an extra minute to repair the hinge on the sheep's gate before it breaks off entirely, is feeding lambs and watching with a sense of smugness that they can get into the new creep feeder and the ewes can't (rebuilt it twice yesterday before the ewes couldn't...our fine \$10 sheep book is in error about the measurements of the average ewe) ...is catching up an arm load of wood, noting that more needs splitting, going in and starting the fire and leaving the bottles to heat and going out to work some more on the brush-clearing...

Too tired is dropping 2 of the 12 eggs you're putting away and stumbling over your own feet. Finding your temper on edge and your mind boggled by all the things that need doing right now.

So our day of rest began at 7 with the building of the morning fire and making of the coffee and sitting a bit to welcome the day. Then 2 hours of chores and then breakfast. A walk down the road to put up the "no visitors today!" sign. Gathering huckleberry branches for the goats. Poking around a bit in the damp forest to see where we might put a new barn, a bigger pasture. While Carmen waters all the animals, I cut and split kindling and bring it in. She churns the butter; I take apart more of the felled apple tree, saw up the bigger pieces for firewood, drag the littler ones to a pile to be burned. Together we shovel out the little chickens' pen, give a sick goat a shot, and it's time for afternoon chores. Another fire for bottles, time to sit and write while Carmen feeds the sheep and buck goats, lets the laying hens out and rakes up their house. Bottles heating and then we have to treat the goat with the abscess and then there's 2 hours or so before we have to think about evening chores---

We'll spend two hours lying about in the sun under our newly-pruned apple trees...idyllic country life. All peaceful and orderly. Day of rest.

The sun went in so we spent an hour and a half indoors. Reading and then Rihaku got out so I had to go catch him and find the break in the fence and fix it while Carmen went to the garden to get chard for dinner and we fixed Floppy J's abscess and it was coffee and chore time. ♀



Keeping farm records is a valuable habit that grows into a labor of love, a journal of cycles. We began with a little brown notebook, dutifully making entries about our mare's heat periods, the birthdates of our lambs, the weekly weighing of our piglet. In a separate book we recorded the first plantings in our garden - date planted length of rows, seed company and kind of vegetable and germination times. As things grew we made notes of disasters (Brussel sprouts "attacked viciously by aphids"; "Most cabbages going to seed before heading") and successes ("Thinned and transplanted to 50 plants"; "Three good pickings by Sept 1). Over the years, our garden notes have taught us about soil and plant deficiencies, when to put in each crop and when to expect the harvest. We have created a source book that is absolutely accurate for our garden location, soil type and climate.

Our animal records quickly outgrew the original notebook. We've kept careful notes on almost everything about each individual and type of creature living here. This enables us now to judge our goats' production, compare fleece weights of the different sheep, know when a group of young hens should begin to lay. Keeping records of all medical problems - how we diagnosed and treated them, how the animal responded - has given us a home veterinary guide. By looking at our "hoof trimming page" we know what animal is due for routine care. The animal book is an orderly, available record of much that we know about our animals - somehow writing it down makes us even more aware of the details.

A third part of our record-keeping is a jumble of suggestions, names and places, and books that sound useful. We try to write down information that's not always immediately needed but may be. Where to get the cheapest fence posts - how much clover seed to plant per acre - the name of an organic farmer in Sacramento we might get feed from. We keep feed tags from the grain we buy so that we can compare ingredients. All this information we also tuck away in our heads - but the details get lost unless we put them down. Keeping records gives us a basis for intentional farming (breeding, planting, developing the land - rather than random growth. Besides, if you ever need to know what a normal baby pig weighs at age three weeks...♀

BE YOUR



The escaped pig

Everyone called to capture the escaped pig
But few are chosen.

Some, fearful of circular nostrilled snout
Hold in the sidelines.

Others, wielding branches shout, run,
But slower by far than four cloven hooves
churning the meadow.

Others call orders: to the right, to the left
close ranks, hold off here.

Dogs bark, joyous in frenzy.

Chickens, heads stretched like arrows,
terror in their feet, run flapping.

Now slowly comes the woman

Carrying a bucket of feed.

Gladly, singing with joy, docile,

The pig follows to his pen.

Sucks through closed lips odiferous broth
Happy, happy to be home.

Not knowing that when cool in autumn days

The ripened farm is held in golden haze

On everybody's lips will be his praise.

If you are keeping goats, sheep, or cattle on your homestead, you should know how to recognize, treat, and prevent bloat. While a mild case of bloat might just make your animal uncomfortable, a severe case can kill it. Knowing how to prevent bloat is learning a few basic factors. Treating it, should it happen, is quite simple.

Any sudden change of feed can cause an animal to bloat. Changing, for example, from hay-feeding to green (and particularly succulent new) pasture is dangerous if it is abrupt. You should make the change slowly--give the animal its hay, then put it out to pasture. for an hour or two. Next day, give the hay again, and turn it out slightly longer. Continue until the animal's system has time to adjust to the new feed. Make all feed changes this slowly--whether you are adding new things, changing a balance of grains, trying some new hay or silage. Never turn animals out onto wet green pasture. Wait until the dew dries off. If possible, always feed some dry hay first. Never graze your animals on a pasture that is predominantly leguminous plants (especially clover or alfalfa) without taking certain precautions. Such pasture is dangerous (bloat causing) and best avoided. You should always plant 50% grass, 50% legumes.

If you think your pasture is dangerous but must use it, you can prevent bloat by feeding the animals dry hay (10 lb/head, cattle) before putting them out. Or you can give each animal 2 to 4 oz of peanut oil or tallow-- (this is the most effective measure). You can restrict pasture so the animals must eat all of the plants (not just the succulent parts). Some people dose with antibiotics--procaine penicillin, for instance, controls activity of the bacterial flora and limits gas production. This seems least desirable. Your pasture may only be dangerous a few weeks (when very succulent) and it may be worthwhile cutting the pasture for hay, or not using it at that time rather than risking bloat.

Bloat may occur if an animal breaks into the barn and gorges on grain (an argument in favor of tight-lidded garbage cans for grain storage--and good latches). Or if it gets out of the pen or pasture and eats a lot of unusual feed (from food commodities to natural vegetation). Spoiled hay or grain, feed that is too finely ground, and chilled or frosted vegetation may cause bloat. Insufficient roughage in a diet (too little hay, too much grain) can also cause it. In young animals, bloat may be caused by drinking milk too rapidly, or by sucking in air at the end of a bottle. This is an important thing to watch for if you let visitors or small children bottle-feed your lamb or kid.

In all the above cases, bloat is considered to be "primary." "Secondary" bloat may occur if an animal gets some solid object--an apple, a corncob--lodged in its esophagus. The symp-

OWN VET

toms are the same. Treatment is slightly different.

Bloat happens when the animal fails to expel the gas in its rumen. This leads to an "excessive accumulation of gas in the first two compartments (rumen and reticulum) of the . . . stomach" (Merck Vet. Manual). Failure to expel the gas is due to a complex interaction of factors. The plants or grains eaten (their pectin, protein, and roughage content), the microflora of the rumen (which affects its Ph) and the amount and composition of the saliva flow are involved. In bloat, a foamy, fermenting mass forms. This prevents the working of the normal gas-expelling mechanism. The animal begins, quite literally, to swell up. Distension of the left side is marked. The animal will stop eating, will begin to breathe more and more heavily. It is obviously in distress. Sometimes it will begin to salivate profusely. Goats will often hold their ears back strangely and grind their teeth.

Act immediately if you think your animal is bloated. A goat or sheep should be given a dose of non-toxic vegetable oil to act as a de-foaming agent. For a grown animal, a couple of ounces of peanut, corn or soybean oil is good. Give proportionately less to younger animals—an ounce or less for a kid. You can repeat these doses in half an hour or so. Mineral oil also works. Cream is slightly less effective, but will do. Aids to Goatkeeping suggests you give "half a pint of raw linseed oil with a teaspoon of turpentine added." Give as a drench (a liquid given forcibly to an animal, though carefully, so as not to get it down the windpipe), then hold the goat's mouth open and have another person massage the animal's sides "vigorously and forcefully until the gas is relieved or vomiting occurs." If the bloat is mild, "give a tsp of soda dissolved in 4 oz of water; then hold the head up and the mouth open to allow gas to escape". All of the preceding may be used on a sheep. Or the standard "2 oz of turpentine in a quart of milk." A cow should be given a dose of any of the same—but 8 oz to a pint. It helps to keep the sheep or goat moving. Don't let it lie down. For a cow, it is suggested that you stand the animal with its front feet up, give it the oil drench, and tie a bit of some sort (a stick of wood, a rope of twisted straw) in its mouth. The bit will make the animal keep its mouth open and chew a lot, and this helps expel the gas.

If an animal is so badly bloated it has collapsed, you may have to puncture the body side to allow gas out. This is a last resort. You can try a stomach tube first—but in primary bloat, very little frothy gas will be able to come up. If it is secondary bloat caused by obstruction, the tube will reveal this as well as help relieve the gas. Using a thin-bladed sharp knife or a trocar (a special instrument for this purpose) you puncture the left side of the animal. . . in the center of the triangle formed by

continued



To a Toggenburg goat raised on coastal plains

Atop a rusty barrel
horned head in sculptured silhouette
Daphne queen of the mountain plays.

Of ancient race
and alpine grace
seeking with yellow slitted eyes
for snow-capped mountains,
pale blue skies.

And does descend to munch
the succulent blackberry branch
to prove that even if torn from native peak
Nature provides for those who staunchly seek.

continued

the hip bone, last rib, and the back muscle. Give the knife a twist to let the gas escape, but don't let it escape too rapidly." (Approved Practices in Sheep Production). This method too works best in secondary bloat. The frothiness of primary bloat may not come out the tube. Defoaming agents given at once are best.

When we were raising our goat kids on calf-replacer (powdered cow's milk) we had many cases of bloat. We treated them by giving the kid a little mineral oil, then some baking soda dissolved in water (most kids will take anything in their bottles), and by forcing it to walk around. Spent many an anxious night pushing a reluctant kid around the kitchen floor before it began to deflate. Now we raise our kids on goat's milk and have no problems with bloat. My feeling is that giving the kid cow's milk--hard for them to digest--gave them chronic indigestion--which leads to chronic bloat.

Death from bloat may "result from a number of causes--heart failure, a burst blood vessel, or literal rupture of the intestines due to internal pressure of the gas." (Herbal Handbook). It may also be caused by absorption of toxic gases. Bloating and death may occur really rapidly--but usually you will have ample time to recognize the symptoms and treat the animal. Don't be afraid to drench the animal even if the case looks mild--you won't hurt it and you may be saving its life. After any case of bloat, feed the animal lightly (rolled oats or bran mash, a little good hay) for a few days. And keep a special eye on that animal--it may be unusually susceptible to future cases.

Next month's column will talk about scouring in animals--an even more common problem. ♀

Women's Life at the GARDEN OF JOY BLUES

Women's role is, we hope, equalized by weekly rotation of all chores. Each time each person gets one household task (such as sweeping floors or dishwashing) and one farm chore (such as milking, care of rabbits, etc.). Cooking is a spontaneous free-will offering, in practice, almost daily rotation. So the obvious sex discrimination is eliminated. But on a subtle level we all have a lot to learn. The men need to learn to treat the women as self-determinant beings whose ideas are of value, especially in carpentry. The women need to learn to take the initiative in such activities as getting fire wood and building instead of waiting for a man to come boss them or guide them.

How do we learn? By practice, by reading books, by being taught a skill from one who knows it. I've learned to do elementary carpentry from my mate, but really in some ways that's the hardest road to follow. He is too often watching over me, and I am too often begging help I don't really need. Lin and I help each other to learn sometimes, but we both know pretty little about exactly the same skills. Good books help a lot and they can't criticize your first poor efforts either.

What I want to stress is the need for courage to try: a couple of years ago I could not lift a bale of hay. I gave up trying--assumed I was too small (5'3" and 105 lb.) and let Peter do it. Two months ago I tried again...somehow I found it well within my capacity to pick the bale up. I had grown stronger without knowing it and hadn't ever re-tested my assumption of incurable weakness against reality. It is still not an easy thing to do, but I do it often enough now to know exactly how hard it is.

What takes up a whole lot of my energy is raising a child, soon enough to be two. Regardless of other communards diapering, amusing, and feeding her, Althaea needs me at times which are often inconvenient. However, community life helps this situation to a fantastic degree and I doubt I would be a very creative person at this time without the aid of others to make free time for me.

We want to be pretty well as self-sufficient as possible. We live very simply (not to be completely confused with primitively) and use only hand and animal power our work. We grind our flour, make our soap, and so forth in the typical pseudo 19th century style, with of course many modern technological aids, such as epoxy glue and rapidograph pens. ♀





MEMOIRS OF AN EX-HOMESTEAD WIFE

My first visions of country life, like many others, were formulated by the pages of the Whole Earth Catalogue. The final decision to leave Los Angeles 4 years ago was sudden and dramatic. I was searching the bottomless pit of my purse for my car keys when I SAW what it was I was rummaging through. A vision more horrible than Banquo's severed head appeared before my eyes: check books, credit cards, eye liner, lipsticks, bank statements, work schedules, school schedules, nursery school schedules, rent receipts—a depersonalised compendium of who I was that I could barely face. I knew that part of me was strangling and that there must be a better healthier way to live. At that time I was the West coast office of an advertising agency handling all the undergrounds; I had a good glimpse at the unreality of the Hollywood record scene where no one was every really satisfied because someone else was always one-up (the result of masculine competition?). There seemed little

real difference between that and other hip, straight, or academic subcultures, only different status symbols. I did not want to compete in a losing game where somebody else made the rules—so, I and the man I was relating to developed a vision which was to be our way out. This vision included a whole new mythology I think developed as a reaction against the disgust we felt for everything around us—the jaded concrete apathetic ugly world of Los Angeles as we experienced it. This was the mythology of The Righteous Way.

I was 26, divorced, and a mother of a 3 year old (still defining myself by past relationships to men and present to child.)—bright competent, frenetic and afraid. He was 28 married but seeking love(?). We were both avid city gardeners. He was to be our protector—we were to give his life meaning and inspiration. We would save each other; buy a piece of land, build a house, seek our alternative to the harried city life by returning to the natural cycles. Thus, a quick divorce (ah, built on ashes, built on sand), a new blissful union. We were actually married twice—once in a Sufi tent at the Renaissance Faire, a high hippy wedding that could have been written up in Rolling Stone..“the bride wore crocus and daffodil entwined in her long braided hair,” and once in Las Vegas for parents and the law. Thus with all of our belongings packed into a 1941 GMC van we moved out towards Mendocino and our new life on 1 acre of meadow land. We were going to make our fantasy become real, and we did. However, in doing so we built a monument to the nuclear family that became a coffin.

In looking back I am amazed at my naivete. I thought I desired freedom, that I was trying to break the mold, but we created a world for ourselves that did not let us breathe—the role images of who we were to be were so clearly defined. In my head I wanted to be the perfect homestead wife and us to be that cosy homestead family. I wanted and worked for everything that was offered by the Have More Plan, Mother Earth News issue #2 page 67. We worked hard and at times, but not often, well together. In 2 years we had built a house, fenced and grew an abundant garden, built outbuildings, raised 2 goats and 24 chickens, planted fruit trees and artichoke patches. I planted a beautiful flower garden that I loved. It was looking good, only the tensions of what we did and what we really wanted to do was growing too. I think in the same vein but much heavier, we even had a child because it seemed “the right way,” the natural outcome—a beautiful curly haired boy to smile and complete the picture, to consummate (or perhaps make up for) a love that was never freely given. It is still painful for me to write this. I know that I did not rationally consider the realities of having another child in terms of that child's life and mine. Children in paradise laugh all the time, and somehow I thought I could escape the inherent sexism of motherhood. I was naive and too old to be naive.

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We were over-amped with responsibilities that we did not want. For me the bread was baking, the sprouts were sprouting, the yogurt was coagulating and my life often felt like a t.v. version of Jackie Kennedy touring the White House--"and here is our compost heap," followed by a 10 minute speech on how it worked. After 2½ years my mind was growing as soggy as corn meal mush and wheat germ-untoasted. We had not made our dream match who we really were or reflect what we wanted. I became so tied into food preparation and child care that I forgot what I wanted even when I tried to remember (maybe I never knew.) We both enjoyed looking at goats but nobody wanted to be responsible for milking every day. Product had once again become more important than the process. Fights ensued over who did what--who didn't take care of the tools. Where cooperation, equality, and similar work habits are a must (note that in terms of who you want to homestead with,) ours varied greatly. The resulting energy drain was due not only to personal problems. A lot were inherent in my powerless position of sacrificing, other-oriented homestead wife. I was still trying to create a whole package. At first I had accepted the narrowly defined duties, but even after I intellectually refused that role, I was too intimidated to really force myself

to learn the skills I desired. Besides, why should I, when he could do it better and faster, the before cheaper? It was a good escape from facing myself.

I was only slowly, painfully and with new awareness that I began to let go of the dream of how I wanted our lives to be, and thereby leave myself some space to grow. It was only too at that point that I began to carve a reality for myself that might be satisfying. I am just beginning to explore what that reality is now.

For me it is still life in the country, not as the only way, but one that allows me to express my still potent desire to help green things grow. It is not as a wife because I let too much of me die within the security of that relationship. Too much of what we were to each other was the dream and not the reality. I am building my own house now, using my own tools; it feels good. My daughter says after we chopped and stacked a cord of wood, "See, I told you a 7 year old girl and a 29 year old woman can survive by themselves." I feel loved by a community of friends that I share an intellectual and emotional rapport with. I am beginning to be, but it has taken time, space, and a willingness to let go of form--even one which seems most beautiful. ♀





"The Farmer, she..."

Since most of us who live in the country, trying to survive mainly from the products of our own labor and land, have not inherited any of the necessary knowledge or skills we need to accomplish this we must turn to others for help. As we are isolated on separate homesteads, some of the most accessible teachers are farm journals, magazines, and books. But women beware! Most of this information is written by and for men. When you read "farmer" they don't mean you. You are the Farmer's Wife, a valuable, even necessary, adjunct to the farmer. Here is Jerome Balanger's (editor of Countryside Magazine, Dairy Goat Guide and Rabbit World) Portrait of His Lady - Diane Balanger; "the mother of four children and a homestead wife. She bakes bread, makes cheese, weeds the garden, cans hundreds of quarts of good things to eat and freezes more... and she's the one who gets stuck with the pin feathers after everybody else gives up after a chicken butchering session. She's been active in Girl Scouts for several years and her favorite pastime, sewing, too often falls by the wayside as she tends to the demands of the rest of us... She can unstuck stuck zippers that I can't budge, untangle balls of string I would throw out in disgust, find things that everybody else is 100 per cent positive that the fairies stole, and being a registered nurse, is at her best when somebody's sick and needs a little TIC, be it family, neighbor or livestock... Women's lib leaves her cold, she says. She's a woman, and likes it. Of course, that doesn't keep her from driving the bulldozer, helping to build a shed, load hogs, castrate goats, dock lamb's tails... just so long as nobody sees her with her hair mussed, her hands rough and dirty, or manure on her shoes. Nor does it prevent her from allowing me to do the cooking, the dishes or the laundry once in awhile."

The Mother Earth News (my friend, Harriet, calls it the Earth Mother News) is a magazine geared to exploring the endless variety of poss-

ibilities in country living. One feature, "Working For the Fun of It" is suggestions for making money on the side while taking care of the farm. Suggestions picturing men are news reporter, truck hauler, and guitar teacher. Suggestions for women are home steno service, ("Your overhead is practically nil, you don't have to go anywhere or get sitters or buy a fancy wardrobe (or any wardrobe,



The John Deere Tiller.

For men of the soil... from men of the soil.

for that matter)... you can always stop in the middle of a letter and cook dinner") and making wondrous bread wrapper rugs ("I find that I can blend an interesting home craft with a small attack on both inflation and today's pollution problem by recycling throwaway bread wrappers into soft, cushiony, crocheted rugs... My husband... made off with one of my four-foot circular throws before I ever had a chance to spread it in front of the kitchen sink (I'd made the rug just for that spot, too). The mat, he says, is perfect for lying on when he works under the car and it

continued

has now become a permanent part of his equipment") There are no jarring exceptions to this way of life in the pages of Mother Earth News. From the Plovboy Interview at the beginning (Issue 11 features Helen and Scott Nearing, the well-known authors of *Living the Good Life*). In six pages of questions and answers Helen speaks mainly in one line phrases such as "Scott has a great garden book" and "I'd add two more aphorisms "Be prepared to work hard" and "Find the right mate".) clear through to the Contacts in the back ("I'm 26 and my wife is 23, and we're expecting our first child soon...I'm an inventor, engineer, architect and a bit of a scientist, with an interest in writing and art. I'm skilled as a carpenter, mason, plumber, electrician, welder and mechanic and have some tools and equipment, a welding machine and a small library. My wife is a good homemaker excelling in all the usual skills, and is creative in her own less obvious ways." and "Being previous city dwellers, we find our year-old farming situation absolutely comfortable and just pretty much all we three have ever wanted. our peaceable kingdom is a hundred-year-old farmhouse, set on 40 acres in south western New York State. Having no car and being far from town, we find that our lives are HERE and only HERE. Our time is spent growing organic foods, working on the house and surroundings, hunting, fishing, tapping maples, raising chickens, housing dogs and cats, playing, singing and reading. Life is full...EXCEPT! We have what seems like three weeks of dirty dishes, darned socks and a tasty, hot dinner would add much joy to our lives. Most of all, we just need one or more womanly figure(s) humming sweet melodies in the kitchen... someone(s) to share our home and fill the gaps in our lives. Willy, Theo, and Ward".) women know their place on the New Hippie Homestead.

So now that we've been fantasized as perfect little wife by all these chauvinist farmers, what do they say when we do, perchance, dare to invade their field of animal husbandry. Women's interest in breeding and raising productive livestock is seen as an urge to fulfill our maternal instincts and is not taken seriously. David Mackenzie in his book *Goat Husbandry*, describes the British Alpine goat as having "an independence of character which would be better appreciated if there were more men farming goats and fewer women keeping them as pets." But the reality in the United States is that it is mainly women who "farm" goats, women who are the largest breeders of some of the best dairy goats,

and a woman, Eula Fay Frey, who was responsible for the development of the American LaMancha, a hardy, high-producing, new breed of goat. In the Sept. 1972 issue of The Shepherd magazine (the sheep trade journal) a young girl writes to ask if she can consider becoming a veterinarian. Her answer is from C.C.Beck, D.V.M.. He says that she is certainly academically capable, and can probably overcome her small size through ingenuity, but there is another problem. "Again, I repeat, loving animals and desiring to work with them and administer to their health needs are sometimes two different situations, at least for women."

This peculiar disbelief of women's authenticity as a productive animal farmer has been shown to me many times in my four years as a goat raiser and breeder. I would guess that almost all goat and cow dairies in this country remove the kids and calves at birth and pan or bottle feed them. The object, after all, is to get the milk from the mother for yourself. However when we, two women, follow this procedure we are accused of baby-snatching and substituting these poor animals as our own denied infants.

Featured the next month on the cover of this same magazine is a fashionable, young woman clothed entirely in wool, leading a sheep on a leash. She is Miss Wool and that is her place in the sheep industry.

The same Manglish that describes all children as "he" is, of course, used for livestock, only it seems more blatantly sexist because of the unfamiliarity of the terms. Young horses come in varieties, in about equal number - fillies and colts. However, at the tack shop, one can only buy a colt halter. And the training book for all young horses is *Training Your Colt to Ride and Drive*. Farm animals are largely matriarchal societies. The female is in the limelight and this can be so unfamiliar to some men that they tend to overlook it. At a seminar on goats held at the county fairgrounds, and experienced veterinarian was describing the milking doe standing beside him. "The dairy goat's body must be well built to produce heavily. He must have strong legs, straight back and well-attached udder."

The Farmer's Wife is praised and the woman farmer is sneered at. And once again the woman is made to stay in her place. But if country women get together and teach each other more things than their granola recipes and if reading about sheep in this magazine convinces you to start your own flock, then it will change.





IVE TECHNOLOGY

ING • TILLING • FERTILIZING
CROP ROTATION

INVENTED CULTURES

INVENTED CULTURE

IRRIGATION

WOMAN-CREATED HYBRIDS

AUGUST 1998

MOON STARS SUN IS THE
RITES OF SEAS
godde
FACTUAL NUMBERS
LENDERS FESTS

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DANCING RITES OF THE FUTURE WORLD

DANCING RITES OF THE FUTURE WORLD

SHELTER
FROM THE WEATHER

SHELTER
FROM THE WEATHER

PROTECTION
HING PLASTERING MASONRY
TENTS TEMPLES
WOODCUTTING AXES
888 MATHEW

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FOOD PREPARING/PRESERVING

SCOVING OF ORGANIC
ACCESSING WINE/MAKING
RICH CHEESES, USE OF
BAKING BEER
BREWING BEER
SALTING
DRYING OF
USE OF FOOD TO PRESERVE
GRINDING
FLOUR
FRYING
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WIND-RESISTANT
BARK CLOTH
OTHER BAUNT FIBER
WEEKS FROM
EXTRACTION OF
ALPACAS YAKS
USE OF

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USE OF

planting The perennial

As offsprings of upward mobility parents and philosophical children of the dharma bum generation, we have rightously inherited our "on the road" attitude. Perennial transients, at least in our heads, we delight in those vegetable seeds that will produce the quickest. Ah, for a 9½ day cabbage or a 13 day pumpkin-orange and vine ripe. But to me, a homestead garden without some perennials is a strawberry patch perhaps?, artichokes?, raspberries?, (not to mention asparagus and rhubarb of which I am not going to utter another word) is about as uninteresting as a garden full of 22 day radishes. Invest, young women, in the future. Reap, year after year, the harvest of well planted perennials and know joy, not to mention strawberry shortcake, steamed artichoke hearts in garlic butter, aromatic herbs and other such material plane rewards.

My first offering is the strawberry, Latin fragaria, meaning pleasant odor. For those of you fixated like me at the Easter egg hunt level, strawberries will give you a summer full of fun. The strawberry, known to the Romans, has been a cherished delicacy through the ages, but always as a wild fruit. At one time in England they sold for 10lbs a pound. Gathered in the woods, they were brought to London by horseback, often at great risk from armed highwaymen (fathers of the modern hijacker). It was not till 130 years ago that the cultivated strawberry took its proper place in the garden, so that you at no risk, except gluttony, could walk from your back door to the strawberry bed to harvest this red herbaceous perennial. What we call the berry is actually a specialized swollen pistil receptacle, the fruit, botanically speaking is the tiny seeds inside. Strawberries contain a small amount of vitamin A and B, and are a fairly good source of C.

ORDERING: 50-75 plants should be sufficient for a family of four to begin with. In most sections early spring planting is best. New plants should be one year old stock. They should have healthy tops with a few green leaves, moderately strong crowns and vigorous tassels of straw colored or white roots. I have always planted the everbearing varieties which in a cool coastal climate produce well from May to October. Where summers are hot and short dividing your plants between early, middle and late spring bearing strawberries will give most abundant results.

PREPARATION: Strawberries need a rich, light, moisture retentive soil in full sun. The bed must be well drained so plants don't rot. A gently sloping southern exposure gets the green star. Almost any soil will produce a crop, but the best is slightly acid, fertile loose and open. Strawberries need large quantities of water, especially during bearing time. Because roots don't penetrate deeply into soil it is important to have large amounts of humus dug into the first foot of top soil before plants are set out. Barnyard manure supplies nutrients as well as humus and is best, but sawdust, woodchips (my favorite), corncobs, etc. fortified with organic nitrogen does great too. An application of rock phosphate and granite dust should be mixed along with organic material at bed preparing time. If this is done the previous fall you will have a beautiful loam, if not do it quickly now and plant anyway.

PLANTING: Everbearing strawberries which do not produce runners are planted in hills 12"-18" in rows that are 18"-24" apart. The variations for spring bearing runner producing are endless. One easy bed formation is to let matted rows develop removing old plants after the harvest each year.

Strawberry plants should be protected from sun and wind while being planted. Work on a cloudy day or cover roots with wet burlap. Dig a large hole and make a small mound in the center. Spread roots well over the dirt mound. Set the plants exactly as deep as they grew in nursery- roots covered but crowns of leaves above soil. If planted too low crowns will rot-too high the roots will dry out. Give each plant a quart of water after it is set- then mulch well. Again, I prefer woodchips as the acidity seems to make my berries thrive, but hay will do fine. The mulch will discourage weeds and help keep soil moist. A thick, 4-8 layers, newspaper mulch (covered for looks

continued



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by hay) in the aisles is the best suppression I have for foolproof weed control throughout the entire garden. Strawberries are great planted in traditional barrels, hanging pots, and scrap wood boxes. They combine well with summer flowers too.

MAINTENANCE: Good care, plenty of organic fertilizer, and a permanent mulch can make a bed last much longer than the usual 2-3 years. The same everbearing plants trimmed back to no leaves in the fall, organically fed, and mulched with rich compost have rewarded gardeners for 8-10 years. Runner varieties should be thinned after harvest 1 plant to 12sq. inches, marking those that produce best for survival. Watering berries from overhead sprinkler early in the morning on sunny day so leaves will be dry by night prevents fungus diseases from growing. Companion plant with bush beans, spinach, borage or lettuce. Do not plant by cabbage.

Picking strawberries in the cool early morning is best. Besides, you might beat the children, who if they are like mine, seem to

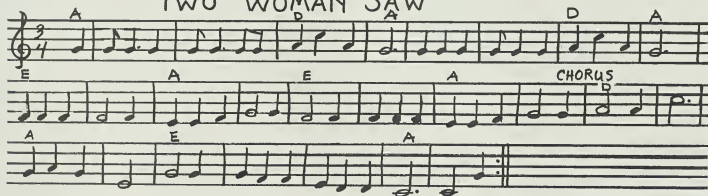
pitch their tents in the strawberry patch. Strawberry avarice is a rampant disease in children and adults; it should be severely punished or another 100 plants set out.

And now a quick word for artichokes. Beautiful ornamental thistle presenting delicious edible buds. Heavy feeders, produce best where summers are cool and foggy. Protect with baskets or heavy mulch if winters freeze. Prepare beds with manure, plant suckers in spring or fall 6" deep. Put plants 3-5' apart in rows 4-6' apart. Mulch roots and keep soil moist. A good plant will produce 10-20 buds each year. Feed in the fall after trimming down and in spring when new leaves appear. They make a nice background for flower gardens too.

Raspberries, blueberries, rosehips, herbs, delphiniums and more. Perennials all worth the wait if you plant now. Be spared the hindsight of gazing 4 years hence at the spot where your beautiful rosa rugosa hedge might be bordering a fine 30 year asparagus bed. Invest in the earth. §



TWO WOMAN SAW



I Two women, two women
On a Two woman saw,
Each helps the other
And both will stay warm
Cutting the logs
To weather the storm,
One pulls, one pushes,
One pushes, one pulls

Chorus Oh yes, oh yes
This way is good,
Soon, oh soon
There'll be plenty of wood

II Two women, Two women
On a Two woman saw,
Cutting the bands
That are rubbing us raw,
That keep us from living
And loving each other,
Making us wait
On some man or other,

Chorus

III Two women, Two women
On a Two woman saw,
We'll build a fire
And you'll be warm too,
Sisters together
See what we can do,
Love is the law
As we see when we saw.

Chorus

POLE FRAMING

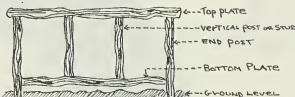
I began my goat barn with my husband, Chris, and a woman friend. The three of us spent one day cutting, stripping and trimming poles. The next day Chris and I framed out the building; the day after we began to put up the walls with a six year old friend watching. Chris was in a bad mood that day, impossible to work with. I told him I would rather work alone than have my pleasure in the process spoiled by his anger and frustration. I began to do the work he had always done: measuring, cutting, nailing; my friend Rainbow did the work that was usually mine: holding, handing, helping. Suddenly I realized that I had merely substituted the child for the woman—that he would learn no more than I had "helping" build my first house. So we began to share the work equally—each measuring, holding plywood, nailing, handing boards. I resigned myself to the wasted lumber and inexact cuts of child or woman learning. And in all that day neither he nor I made any real mistakes: he measured as well as I did, cut as straight as I, toe-nailed poles without bending nails. By the end of the day we, a woman and a six year old child, had put up four walls, two windows, two doors, and a roof. We were flying with the power of what we had done—for the first time in each of our lives we had actually built something: never again would we stand and "help".

I stood in the middle of that dirt-floored, low-ceilinged, plywood shed and knew that wherever I went after that, I would always be able to provide myself with shelter. And since then I have had a new sense of possibility—fear does not paralyze me anymore when I know I need a lean-to for milking or a cabinet to hold my tools. The principles of framing are the same no matter what the job and I am no longer afraid of creating with wood.

Pole framing is the simplest of all construction since there is no foundation or floor. It is the best place for a beginner to start. Pole framed buildings are perfect for woodsheds, goat barns, chicken houses, tool sheds, etc. They are framed with young trees—both for simplicity and to save on lumber costs. The walls and roof can be made of boards, plywood or even plastic, depending on what you're going to use it for—my goat barn is plywood with mineral coated tarpaper over plywood for the roof. My milking shed which gets no wear and tear, is just plastic stretched between poles.

I try to plan all my buildings to be in units of 4 feet since that's the dimensions of plywood and a standard size for lumber. My goat barn, for instance, was 12' by 12' with vertical supports every 4 feet. The end posts on each wall are sunk in the ground (in 2 feet deep post holes) to anchor the whole building since there is no foundation. The interior posts are nailed between top and bottom "plates" (poles that run the length of the wall at ground and ceiling height). These "plates" are needed to anchor plywood top and bottom and save digging more post holes for the vertical supports. A twelve foot front or back wall would look like this:

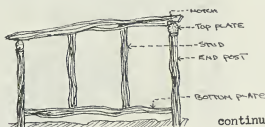
FRONT or BACK WALL



Since your floor will be uneven, it's not important that your bottom plate be on the ground. In fact, keeping the plate a few inches above the ground will keep it from rotting.

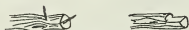
In order for the roof to drain, it must have some slope (at least 1 foot in 12'). So, the front wall is framed the same way as the back except the vertical posts (studs) are at least one foot shorter than those on the back wall. (My goat barn was 8' on the back wall and 4' in front to save on plywood, since the goats don't need as much height as I do.)

Side walls are slightly, but not much, more complicated. Rafters connect the front and back walls, running from top plate on the back to top plate on the front. You need your end rafters in place in order to determine the height of the studs on the side walls. Cut the rafters longer than the length of the wall to allow extra length for slope and overhang (which helps protect your low wall). The rafter has a notch cut in it, so it will fit tightly over the top plate, like this:

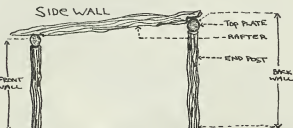


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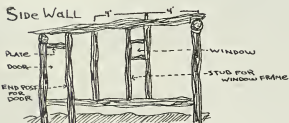
I have found that just sawing the rafter at an angle (as shown) works fine at the low end. This notch is the hardest thing of all and it is not very hard, just spend a little time visualizing how the rafter needs to fit. Saw down into the rafter to the depth of the diameter of the top plate. Then hold a hatchet across the end of the rafter and tap it with a hammer. The piece should pop out and you have your notch, like this:



Once the rafters and end posts are in place, the bottom plate should be nailed in. Then you drop a line from the rafter perpendicular to the bottom plate every 4 feet. This line tells you the height of your studs (they differ since the roof slopes). A framed side wall 12' long would look like this:



This is how to frame a door and window on a side or sloping wall:



To frame a doorway, you must sink end posts on either side of the door. (Essentially, you end the wall at the door.) So it is easiest to put the door at a corner where there is already one end post. Studs in that wall must still be every four feet from the end, so there is something to nail plywood to. Windows require a stud on either side of them and a "plate" at the top and bottom. This is how to frame a door and a window on a back or front wall:



Planning Your Building: the first thing to do is to decide how large a building you want, which direction it should face and where windows and doors should be placed. Put a solid wall or corner (no doors or windows) towards the direction from which most bad weather comes and slope your roof away from bad weather. Here, for example, most storms and all sun comes from the south, so roofs that slope north (low wall to the north) last much longer than those facing south. We get almost no storms from the NE so I placed my door in that corner. Try to plan your building so that it uses the least amount of plywood or boards possible by staying on 4' modules and lowering the ceiling on animal barns or storage sheds.

Once you have your building in mind, sketch a simple framing plan for it. Then count the number and size of poles that you will need.

Poles: They should be young trees, as straight as possible. In this area, redwood "suckers" are perfect since they grow very straight and need to be thinned anyway. Choose trees that don't taper too rapidly--your poles should be 3" in diameter at the ends--though I have used some rafters that tapered off to 2" since there is no snow here. End posts should be at least 4" in diameter, preferably more, at their base. All trees must have the branches stripped off, as close to the pole as possible, so the knobs won't interfere with boards or plywood. Use a hatchet or a draw knife (see the tool column) to do this. Bark should be stripped off to prevent rotting. Redwood bark will peel off by hand; other kinds need a draw knife. (Goats will strip the bark off for you too). End posts should be soaked in Penta or creosote (see the fencing article), otherwise your house is likely to rot and topple in several years.

Framing: Clear your building site and get it as level as possible. Mark off your corners and check to make sure they are reasonably square by measuring the diagonals (they should be equal). This is important or the plywood won't fit at one corner. Once you have squared your corners, (it took me over an hour to do that), dig the post holes for the end posts and door frame. Posts should be 2 feet in the ground for an 8' high wall, 1 1/2' deep for a 4' wall. Put your end posts in place and tamp the ground as you fill the hole (pack it down by beating it with a pry bar or piece of iron pipe capped on one end). In wet weather you will need to add gravel or rocks to get the hole to pack down. The posts must be firmly in the ground.

Frame your end (not sloping) walls first. Cut your bottom plate a fraction of an inch too long so that it has to be pounded into place with a hammer and has a tight fit. Toe-nail it into place (toe-nailing is nailing at an angle through one piece of wood and into another; it is used when the post is too thick to nail through directly).



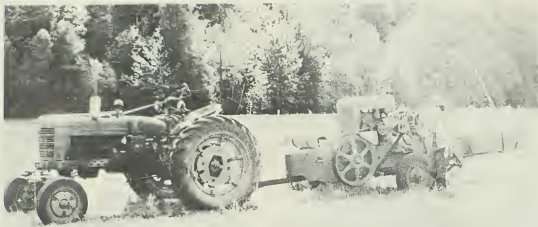
Use 16 penny or 20 penny galvanized nails, depending on the size of the pole. Avoid nailing into knots or where branches were; the wood is so hard it will bend nails and it's easy for a beginner to think she is at fault. The top plate goes on after the bottom plate; nail directly through the top plate into the end posts. The studs are cut next--again, cut them just a little longer than your measurement so that it is a tight fit between the plates. The studs should be at "four foot centers"--this means that the 4 foot point is at the middle of the stud, so that both sheets of plywood can nail to the same stud. The base of the studs are toe-nailed into the bottom plate; the top is nailed directly through the top plate into the stud. Since your bottom plate is off the ground, brace under it with a block of wood so it won't give as you nail. Side walls are framed in this same basic

way, except the top plate is a rafter which slopes, and the studs are of varying heights.

Rafters must be notched at one end and cut at an angle at the other so that they will fit over the top plates of the high and low walls. They should overhang the low wall by at least 6 inches with a trench dug below the overhang to drain water away from the building. Rafters can be at 4 foot centers if you use a plywood roof and have no snow. Otherwise, they should be every 2 feet. Place the rafters directly above end posts and studs for greater strength and nail directly through the rafter into the top plate with a 20 penny nail.

Walls may be made of plywood or boards, depending on what is available and cheap in your area. In the next issue of Country Women, we will describe different methods of wall construction. ♀





"our tractor"

Our tractor looks like a huge imposing muddy, and when it's turned on, noisy machine. The men who drive it seem so strong, so macho, so it was with some astonishment that I heard my partner Jean saying one fine spring evening that she would be willing to learn to drive the tractor. Since we always do things together--it's a lot more friendly and fun that way--I knew this meant I too would learn to drive the tractor. I made one request; she would learn from the man but she would teach me.

She told me that really learning to drive a tractor wasn't so much. I knew how to drive a car didn't I? Yes, but I hadn't driven a stick shift in a long time. It will come back she said. Besides one of the men taught my 12 year old son in a half an hour one evening and he said it was easy.

So the next morning there we were bright and somewhat early down at the barn for our first lesson on the McCormick-Deering U Farmall tractor, circa 1940.

Our tractor has five forward speeds and one reverse. Fifth gear is only used on the highway. Fourth is used when we drive our country roads to the fields. First, second and third are for field work. And there is reverse.

The tractor has a brake which can be helpful in working the hilly fields we have or slowing down the tractor and whatever it is pulling. Another way to slow the tractor is to use the engine and down shift. Our tractor's brake is a double pedal shoe. One for each large rear wheel, with a bar which holds them together and lets them act as a single brake. Most of the time you apply equal pressure to each shoe. If you want one wheel to turn rapidly you use one of the brakes to slow down the other one in making a sharp turn.

When you stop our tractor you push down the brakes together and lean down and flip up a lever on the floor that acts like park in a car. We also always put the tractor in gear, either first or reverse depending on the terrain.

Before starting off for anywhere two things should be checked: is there enough gas and water? Getting out in the middle of a field and running out of either can be a discouraging experience. Especially if you have to get emergency cans to the spot.

When these two matters are taken care of on our tractor, you open up the gas line at the engine, climb up and sit down on the tractor seat, call your partner to come join you--it's big enough for two--make sure you have your foam rubber cushion, make sure you have your lunch, put your foot on the clutch and put the tractor in neutral. You push the starter button, after pulling the ignition, give it some air with the choke wire, and some gas with the throttle and wonder of wonders it all comes together.

Our tractor can be started with a hand crank, but it's never been known to have been done in the annals of this community. Our tractor is running on a defective battery by means of hot shooting from the truck which proves you can do anything if you have to. One of the men starts it by rolling it down hill but it really isn't necessary.

When you slowly release the brake, having already put it into first gear, you will start to move forward. That is a big moment. There you are, high in the air with nothing around you, feeling pretty small on that big machine. But it moves quite slowly and is easy to steer. It is best not to run into anything. Our tractor went for a ride by itself when someone didn't put it into gear when he left, and it took the corner off the wood shed. Running off the road isn't serious. It is hard to get a tractor stuck but it will run right over most anything you point it at.

Low hanging branches are a new hazard. You are higher than a car roof so these branches haven't been pruned by passing cars, and if you get fascinated by where your back wheels are

skirting the edge of the ditch, you may get a stiff hit from a high branch. Mostly you would lose your hat, which you will want to wear for summer work. Remember, there isn't any roof to shade you, but the breezes are delightful, especially if you strip off your shirt. If you don't you'll soon have the farmer's tan.

For your first trip, just relax and enjoy the slow ride, about 5 miles an hour gives you lots of time to remember to use the throttle on hills. Plan where you are going to turn around. By the time you have been out over familiar territory and found out how easy it is to steer and learned how to find the various gears, you'll really like it. When you get back to the barn, you will swing into the yard and using the clutch, find reverse, release the clutch, give it a little more throttle and back beautifully into the barn. Hit the ignition button and it all stops. You're safe. You did it.

Don't jump down. Shift it back into some gear that is easy to find and reach down and set the brake lever. Hug your partner and climb down. Now you turn the gas line off with a turning motion, you sort of screw it in. All that's left is to chase the chickens out of the barn and slide the barn door closed. It's nice to have a partner for that job too.

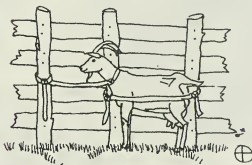
You can drive the tractor. Your next lesson will be to connect it to the machines it pulls and learn how to use them together. On our farm these are the seeder, the harrow, the mower, the rake, and the baler. (see a future issue.) ♣



many farm women are reluctant to deal with unruly or very large animals. but often we have to → whether for the purpose of medication or simply to clean up their feet. herewith is presented a way to tie up any kind of stock, requiring no great strength or struggle. remember in hoove-trimming to always fold the leg you are working on in its natural position → many animals kick if the foot is grasped while the leg is extended. anyway, here is my tried and true

Handy Way to Restrain an Animal for Trimming of Hooves

have to hand two light ropes. fix one, about 3 feet long, to the animal's collar (or tie a bowline (non-tightening) collar on to the beast). lead the creature to a fence and secure it with a foot or more of lead to a post. pull it back til the rope is taut. now run the second rope from a post at the animal's off-side withers, around the chest, near side, and rump, and fasten down hard to a post by its off-side flank. see pictures below. this should hold anything, i hope.



SIDE VIEW

politely modeled by Petunia



TOP
VIEW

The Making Of A Feminist Farm

"And this place has the best television reception around," chortled the real estate man as we bounced through the pygmy forest on a winding dirt road. We glanced at one another from the corners of our eyes. "We're looking for land," we had told him an hour earlier. Our year's lease on house and mountain-top land was going to run out. We had acquired a goat and some baby chicks, had learned to garden, and had become used to the silence of the country. We had the money to buy land and no desire to go back to the city. "An old farm, maybe--" we told him. "I have the perfect place," he informed us. We were skeptical but ready to start looking... The road ended suddenly and there it was: an old, ramshackle, tangly, overgrown farm. Wooden picket fences, blossoming apple trees. A house with a pot-bellied stove in the kitchen and a back porch perfect for late afternoon resting...The pygmy forest had given way to tall redwoods, fir and pine. Open meadows grew knee-deep in grass. The place looked abandoned, peaceful, waiting. We knew before we even got out of the car. Nothing disturbed our idyllic-fantasy-come-to-life. We half-looked at the house (awful - needs fixing), the outbuildings, the barn (falling down??). He pointed vaguely in the direction of the "well" and we nodded and thought about where we would put our sheep. He talked about prices per acre and what a buy. We smiled. He went on about taxes, boundaries, and the previous owners. We smiled a lot. We were home.

In a few months we were actually there - with another goat, our chickens, dogs, cats and some sheep. We at that point were two women - we were joined by another woman from the city and later that Fall by two men. None of us knew anything about farming, though we knew a little about animals and the basics of gardening. Our skills at carpentry, fence building, water pump repair - and the multitudes of other things we had to learn - grew as we worked. We began to collect tools, more animals, grander visions.

Our farming has been a monument to learning-by-doing. With an abandon born jointly of our ignorance and delight, we took on reconstruction of everything at once. That first summer and fall we tore apart the inside of our house, rebuilt cabinets and shelves, installed our woodstoves, redid the plumbing. We steamed, scraped and pried up layers of wallpaper, linoleum, and panelling we didn't like. A lot of beautiful old windows shattered under our first attempts at re-puttying, but we learned to use the tools. We had to have a whole new well dug (to replace what was only a wooden catch-box) while we learned to dig a proper outhouse and live with minimum water. Simultaneously, we shingled the outside of the house, reroofed the barn, put up fences, began a garden. We learned to care for our animals - added a horse and two more goats, then another horse. Every book, pamphlet or experienced person we could get in touch with we read, listened to, learned from. Our city friends grew disgusted with our endless talking about goats and chickens...

On the idyllic side, we spent long hours riding the horses, picking apples from our trees, wandering in our woods. We immersed ourselves in work but took time to play, to learn the feel and secrets of the land. The first winter surprised us with mud, daffodils, green grass and mushrooms. We had our first lambs and kids born. We began to get the books that would be central to our learning to farm - and to see that our trees badly needed pruning, our garden soil would be a real challenge to organic methods...

By spring the three people who had been living with us were gone back to the city and new friends had arrived. The people who came to live and stayed a few months, a year or longer, all shared in our growing here. Sometimes we gave so much energy to learning to live together that we lost sight of the land, of our commitment to and love

for it. Eventually, though, the land would always center and restore us.

When we first came here, we made a firm decision to farm and live as organically as possible, to balance our lives with the ecology of the land. We decided to use only biodegradable soaps (including toothpastes and shampoos), to use only organic fertilizers and no pesticides on garden or trees or animals. It was clear and simple. Not all of the people we lived with shared this commitment. So we became firmer. Made rules. All of the tin cans, glass, aluminum, etc. is recycled. We understand when the hotbed cover in the garden ages and shatters into a million pieces, what a disaster plastic really is. Things turn up in the compost bin that defy organic breakdown. At some point

we became rabid about cigarette filters--they don't decompose and seem to glare up from forest or pasture ground, a very clear reminder that our contract with the land is all-inclusive.

We began to question our first assumptions about life here. A good example is the chain-saw: something we assumed we needed, not examining the realities. We didn't even know that the alternative of an efficient, quiet hand tool (the two-person saw) existed until someone brought us one as a gift our second year. We cut most of our wood by hand that year, using the two-person saw and a bow saw. In the new

silence of our own woodcutting, we became acutely aware of the noise pollution of chain saws. Someone cutting two miles up the ridge or across the

continued





feminist farm continued

river could totally shatter the quiet of our day. Seeing that we could cut our wood by hand and enjoy the process (no shaky arms or rattled nerves afterward)—we began to question our use of the chainsaw. In moving to the country, we'd hoped to simplify our lives and work in ways we believed in. The chainsaw, with its dependence upon the gas and oil companies and its complicated and breakable parts, didn't feel like a step in those directions. Using it meant polluting atmosphere, disturbing the quiet—and it was clearly not necessary. We didn't miss the irony of stoking up our woodstoves with machine-cut wood. Using hand saws seemed a sane and feasible alternative. Since that realization, we have cut most of our wood by hand. Now and then, pressed for time or suddenly faced with winter rains, we still use our chainsaw. It is a problem of time versus energy and efficiency which we are trying more than ever to balance. This year, we're beginning early—cutting next year's wood while this year's winter is still lingering.

The issue of machines and power tools extends beyond the chainsaw/handsaw into other areas of homesteading. Again and again it is a problem of taking on too much with too little knowledge or not enough time. We don't know, for instance, how to build a windmill or simple pump to bring our water up to house, livestock and garden so we rely on an electric pump. We need to turn our garden now and doing it by hand on top of everything else we're doing—seems like a staggering, impossible task. A rototiller is tempting. Yet there again is the pollution of the gas-run motor, the dependency on big industries. We have no answers yet—but at least we are clear on the issues. And trying not to let immediate needs overshadow what we

are ultimately trying to do.

Farming is a total involvement of all your senses, your intellect, your ability to dream and to turn your dreams into reality. Sometimes it's discouraging. We've discovered a lot of things by doing them—doing them wrong and seeing through our failures. One fall we decided to try an area of rye grass in the goat pasture. It was our first attempt (on a very small scale) at planting feed for our animals. We dug up the soil by hand, put down a good cover of hydrated lime, and scattered the seed. Then we raked the soil back. The chickens did some scratching but when the rains came the grass came up quite beautifully. This in spite of our use of hydrated lime—which is properly used as a disinfectant in outhouse or stable! (The proper thing to neutralize our acid soil with is dolomite—lime with the necessary magnesium). We rejoiced in our fine experiment. The goats wouldn't touch it. The chickens feasted for a few months and again the next year. We read at some point that rye grass — if it molds, which it's likely to do in our wet, foggy climate — can cause abortion in goats and sheep. Fortunately for us, our goats were choosy! Eventually the rye grass, unencouraged and unwanted, died away.

We've learned a lot building shelters for our various animals and birds. Then rebuilding them—changing design, space, and utilization of space to fit more to the animals' needs and to general efficiency. We are still amazed by the ease with which you can throw up a perfectly dry tight 8' x 12' shed before the rains begin! And how difficult it can be to get the slope of the land, the use of rain gutters, the pitch and direction of a roof to combine into a stable with a dry floor.

One of our friends— who's also homestead farming— said that the most important thing she's learned so far is "don't make any quick decisions." And to be sure, all of the decisions we've made—whether to fence a pasture here or put the chicken house there— have been reversed, reinstated, argued, absolutely agreed upon, and then changed again. The complexity of setting up a small farm is not to be taken lightly! The way the sun travels the sky in mid-winter can totally change where you ought to locate a goat shed. Shade and water, open space must be considered in locating pastures. The best use of the land and the best land left unused must also be determined. We learn as we live with our land, with our animals.

Farming. Self reliant? Self sufficient? After almost four years here we are still neither. For a long time we thought where we were headed was toward total self-sufficiency. We thought we could produce our own food, our own shelters, our own heat and power sources. We found that we were substituting one dependency for another, though. We weren't buying milk, eggs, or vegetables— but we were buying grain, hay, seeds, tools. We were producing certain of our needs and even surplus things to sell and trade. But our self-satisfaction was based on some myths we had trouble weeding out.

Gradually we have stopped arguing with the people who accuse us of moving to the country to

"escape reality." For a long time we were certain that the reality of our day-to-day living was quite valid and tried to defend our choices. We knew that working hard on our land every day, growing food and raising animals, building and learning, was as "real" as any existence we'd ever lived in the city. It took time for that certainty to outweigh our defensiveness. Now we rarely argue the points. We know that the kind of life we are trying to create is politically, physically, philosophically sound.

It was our dream to have a small farm. Now that we have that farm, it takes all of our resources to learn how to make it work. We know now that we can't do everything...We may be able to produce a lot of our own food, provide our own fuel for heat and cooking, and so on. It takes a great deal of energy just to do these things. We can't imagine - and don't want to - spend hours each day spinning thread for our own clothes (though spinning and weaving the fleece from our sheep is part of what we do). Working with crude, hand-made tools doesn't appeal to us - though we try to keep our tools simple. While we want to farm, and farm productively (produce a surplus for other people), total self-sufficiency is a rapidly vanishing myth. We live in an era of land taxes, building and "health" inspectors, political power structures that intrude continually. But we can learn - are learning - to create some alternatives to the mega-agriculture, the farming of monopoly corporations and heavy-duty machinery and chemicals. We can grow good, organic food, develop small local markets and trade systems. We can work co-operatively and share what we learn. Slowly our farming efforts are giving solid roots to our pastoral vision...

This land has given us endless faith in ourselves. Strength in knowing that we can meet our most basic needs, deal with emergencies, fix machines and care for animals. It has taught us to be resourceful, inventive, in ways we had never discovered we could be. Living and working with other women - for after two years this became a women's farm - has given us courage and absolute confidence. We know that we can do all of it because we have done it and do every day. We've learned the humility that comes when you see that your control over your environment is not absolute. That your relationship with your land, crops, animals is subject to accidents, disasters, chance. We've learned that as much as we care and manifest that caring, our animals die or are killed, our fruit trees get blight, our garden disappears down the gopher hole.

I don't believe that we would trade this land, this life, for any right now. We have fantasies sometimes of long, rolling, fenced pastures. Sometimes we get wanderlust and want to go and see and be...We miss friends who have moved to the Ozarks, or inland 40 miles. We think about all the good movies, museums, libraries...But there's always that special goat kid due in a month. Or shearing time coming up. Nor could we stand to miss mushroom season. Or lambing. Or the blooming of our apple trees. So we stay

season to season, year to year. We grow closer to our land, knowing every place that wild-flowers come and every place that floods in winter. Walking on the compost-spongy soil of our garden, remembering the hard-packed clay we began with, feels good. Knowing generations of goats, sheep, chickens, horses, peafowl and cats is part of it. Watching our orchard grow and bear. Dreaming of beehives -- a pond -- a new barn-----.

This writing is just a little of where we are now, and how we feel about it. We are centered and balanced, still home. We feel ourselves to be among the first of many women who will move back to the land for themselves - who will become farmers, not pioneer wives. Who will form women's collectives in the country, relearn agricultural skills, re-form loving bonds with the earth. Our farm - owned, created and sustained by women - began with an idea. "An old farm, maybe--" An impulsive, spontaneous movement in the right direction. A movement that keeps growing - piecemeal, accidental, now taking form. Growing as we are growing. One and the same. ☺



FARM

TOOLS



HAY HOOKS



STAPLER



ROPE



FENCE PLIERS



DRAW KNIFE



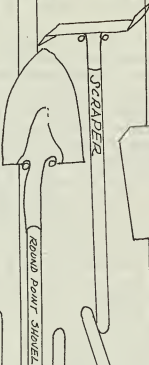
TIN SNIPS



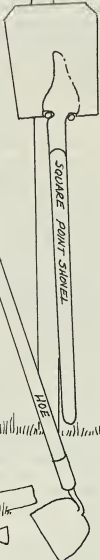
SPADING FORK



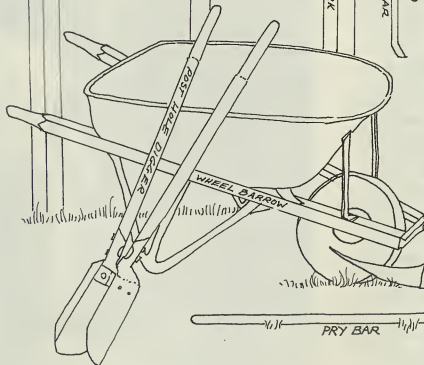
CROW BAR



ROUND POINT SHOVEL



SQUARE POINT SHOVEL

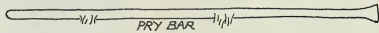


POST HOLE DIGGER

WHEEL BARROW

PICK AXE

MATTOCK



PRY BAR

HAY HOOKS

With a pair of hay hooks you can move and stack heavy bales most efficiently. The hooks are short, thick curved metal, attached to a wooden handle. You can move a bale by sinking one hook deeply into the hay and pulling or tipping the bale. Don't try to use your hooks on the baling wire--the wire will most likely break and the hay scatter everywhere. If you have a strong back and lift properly, you can use both hooks to lift and roll a bale into place or work with a friend, each using one hook.

STAPLER A perfectly adequate staple gun can be bought for \$5 from Sears. They are used for tacking tar paper to the insides of walls, for attaching plastic to wood, and for putting up fiberglass insulation. The gun must be pressed flat against the surface for the staple to set firmly. It's difficult to use well over-head.

FENCE PLIERS are the perfect tool for fencing projects. You can use them to cut wires, hammer in or remove staples, cut hay bale wires, and even to do some wire stretching.

DRAW KNIFE is a tool designed for shaving wood. It can be used to plane wood, to carve with, or to strip poles smooth. It consists of a one-edged blade about 10 inches long with a curved handle at each end. Use it by taking each handle and drawing the blade toward you with a gentle downward pressure. The amount of pressure will control the amount of wood or bark shaved. Keep your stroke smooth, short and controlled to avoid cutting yourself.

ROPE comes in a multitude of grades, sizes and types. Nylon and plastic ropes are difficult to tie well--they slip, stretch and are stiff. Cotton rope rots. Soft hemp is preferable.

TIN SNIPS With a pair of tin snips you can cut flashing for your roofing projects, cut aluminum gutter pipe and cut roofing paper without tearing it. They look just like a pair of scissors with wide, flat blades.

SPADING FORK For turning the soil in your garden, use a spading fork. It is basically a pitchfork with wide tines. It will break the soil up as you work because the soil falls between the tines in small pieces. If you use a shovel, the soil stays in large clumps and if you just turn these clumps you are likely to end up with your topsoil underneath your subsoil. The spading fork is also a useful stable-cleaning tool if you use straw bedding. The lighter pitchfork is traditionally used for pitching dry hay or straw.

PICK AXE is for breaking up rock, hard clay, or packed sand and gravel. It was absolutely necessary when we dug our well, but we've used it very infrequently since then.

MATTOCK There are two types of mattocks. The pick mattock has a broad blade at one end and a pick-type blade at the other. The cutter mattock has two broad blades but one is horizontal and the other vertical. The mattock is invaluable for breaking up hard earth, turning sod, and clearing new ground.

ROUND POINT SHOVEL A short-handled, pointed edged shovel is perfect for digging in narrow spaces, like new shitter holes and wells. I use a long handled, pointed edged shovel for digging and filling in holes and trenches.

SCRAPER and **SQUARE POINT SHOVEL** stable cleaning tools include the stable scraper and a special broad shovel. The scraper is a blade about a foot and a half across and 10 inches high with a long handle attached, rather like a cross between a snowplow and a hoe. It is very useful in scraping the floor surface clean once you've removed most of the dirty bedding. A stable shovel is a square-ended, large scooping-type shovel.

WHEEL BARROW We ended up with two commercial wheelbarrows and an old handmade wooden one. Of the two commercial ones, the deep construction-type wheel barrow is the most useful. It has enough capacity for hauling barn-cleanings, great loads of compost, split firewood. The smaller, shallow garden type wheelbarrow must make 2 or 3 trips instead of one. It is lighter and cheaper but seems to make the work endless. Its wheel will bend like a pretzel under heavy loads. Our hand-made wheelbarrow came with the farm. It is old and crochety and lives in the garden, where it does a little light work hauling weeds or transplanting soil. Its simply-crafted wooden presence is a reminder to us that we could get along without Sears. Two-wheeled garden carts are difficult to maneuver with small capacity.

POST HOLE DIGGER is an elaborated special shovel. Taking it with the two handles apart and the shovels will close around the earth and you can lift the dirt up and out of the hole. As you dig the hole deeper, enlarge the area of the hole so that you can still pull apart the handles when the shovels are in a foot or more. Change the position of the shovels now and then, first here (), then here ().

PRY BAR is a 4 or 5 foot long solid iron bar with one end flattened to a point. The pointed end is used for lifting (using the bar as a lever) and supporting heavy objects like logs or well rings. It is very useful for turning big logs when sawing. The rounded end of the bar is used for tamping (packing down) dirt in post holes. A crow bar is a shorter, curved bar which is used for taking old boards off of walls, prying off large nails and digging trenches in tightly confined places (like under stable walls) for drainage. &



milk

Milk is the most versatile food one can produce on the farm. It's three main components—fat, protein and sugar (lactose) can be separated and changed into totally different forms by churning, incubating or boiling. All the same products can be made from cow's milk or goat's milk. The main difference between these two is the size of the fat globules. Those in goat's milk are smaller, harder to separate, and easier to digest. First I'll deal with whole milk and its possibilities. It should be strained and cooled (in ice water) immediately after milking to assure good flavor and low bacteria count.

Yogurt

Yogurt is a means of preserving milk by changing the lactose to lactic acid, by the action of a pure culture bacteria. Milk should first be heat shocked—warmed to 145° for 15 seconds. This kills pathogenic bacteria (staph, salmonella etc.) but doesn't inactivate enzymes or affect nutrition. Then cool to 110°. Add yogurt starter (this can be expensive Bulgarian powdered starter or plain commercial variety—1 Tbsp. of yogurt to 1 pint of milk). Non-instant powdered milk or evaporated milk can be added to thicken the final product. Experiment with the amount. Stir well. Incubating at 110° is the most crucial step of yogurt making. A few degrees above or below will incubate other bacteria and impair flavor and consistency. The streptococcus ther-

Products

ophilus bacteria is responsible for this and will be lost at a lower temperature. Lactobacillus bulgaricus will grow from 100-115° so within that range you will get yogurt. Six hours is usually time for complete incubation. Here are some ways of holding the temperature: quart jars set in 110° water inside a canner, styrofoam ice case, or insulated box with a low watt light bulb inside; the pilot light on a gas stove; or, most exact, an electric yogurt maker. The mother culture (starter) should be changed every two weeks. We've found that goat's milk yogurt becomes thicker after you've used your own starter for about three consecutive batches.

cheese

Cheese is made by separating the protein (curds) from the milk sugar (whey). If it is made with whole milk, rather than skim, the fat adds a creamy consistency to the cheese. There are many ways to effect the separation of curds

and whey: letting the milk sour slowly, adding rennet (an enzyme from the calf or kid's stomach), adding cultured buttermilk or lemon juice or vinegar. How you handle the curd afterwards determines which of the hundreds of varieties of cheese you'll have. Here I would like to describe the simplest method I know. Next month we'll publish more complicated procedures.

Bring to a boil $2\frac{1}{2}$ gal. of whole milk. Remove from heat and stir in $2\frac{1}{2}$ cups of distilled vinegar. This will give you a rather rubbery, flavorless cheese best for cooking. For a softer curd and delicious lemony flavor, use $\frac{3}{4}$ cups lemon juice first, stir, then add $\frac{3}{4}$ cup vinegar. Replace on heat until all the curd has separated. The whey will be a clear, yellowish liquid and will boil up through the curd. Remove and strain. We ladle the curds into a colander lined with cheesecloth. Add salt as you put in the curd—about 2 Tbsp. If you're making a pressed cheese add garlic powder or seeds (sesame, cumin, or caraway) at this time. Tie up the ends of the cheesecloth and let the whey drip out for 10 min. At this point if you want cottage cheese add milk (up to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup) to the curds and break with a fork. If you want a pressed cheese put it into a bowl with a cover, turn upside down, and weight it down with two bricks.

You can go a step further and make whey cheese which tastes like maple sugar candy (sort of). Boil the leftover whey down (probably 8 hrs. worth of cooking) until the milk sugar is left on the bottom of the pan. Add a little raw sugar. Spoon this brownish paste into a mold (can be made with aluminum foil) and let cool.

Separating

The next things to do with milk all involve separating the cream out. If you have cow's milk this can be scooped off the top of milk that has sat overnight. Goat's cream rises after several days and should sit in the refrigerator, covered, in a large, flat pan to get the most cream. Of course, the most efficient method is the cream separator, a centrifugal machine (either electric or manual) that spins out every bit of cream. From our separator we get one quart of cream per three gallons of milk. If you're planning to make cream products be sure and choose your breed of animal accordingly. Jersey or Guernsey cows and Nubian or La Mancha goats.

Buttermaking

Butter can be made from whole milk, but this method incorporates too much liquid in the butter and it won't keep as long. Separating the cream and using it is best. Churning can be done in a number of ways. Starting with the smallest amount of cream (1 pint) you can shake

it vigorously in a mason jar for about 20 min. Or if you have a quart or two of cream, a glass jar with a beater attached is best. Sears sells electric models and handturned ones are available at junk-antique stores for \$7-\$15. Or rig up your own with an old egg beater. And, finally, if you're into serious buttermaking, the big crock with wooden dasher type is still available. A rule-of-thumb is that for proper concussion of the cream your container should be one-third full.

In our glass jar churner the fat gathers into lumps after about 20-30 minutes of churning (make sure the cream is really splashing around when you're churning). The butter granules should be large enough that you can pour the buttermilk off easily and then rinse them in cold water two or three times until all the milk is gone. Put the mass of lumpy butter on a cold, wet board and flatten it with a cold, wet wooden paddle into a one-inch thick slab. Salt can be lightly sprinkled over it at this point if you wish. Now work the butter, piling it up and spreading it out, until all the milky water is out and the consistency is proper. "Proper" is smooth and easily spread. Next put the butter into a mold or crock and refrigerate. Yield is about one pound of butter per quart of thick cream.

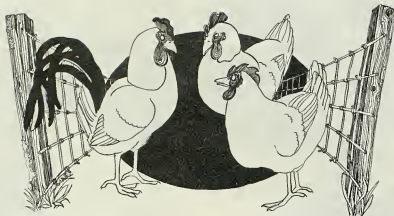
Dairy thermometers, square wooden, 1 lb. butter molds, and butter cartons, wrappers and wooden paddles are available from the American Supply House, P.O. Box 1114, Columbia, Miss. 65201, at very low prices. Their catalog lists complete supplies for the "Goat Owner and Dairy (person)" and is free on request.

SOUR CREAM

Stir together three cups whole milk, two cups thick cream and one cup cultured buttermilk. (To make buttermilk add $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of commercial buttermilk to one quart whole milk. Let stand overnight and refrigerate.) Warm the sour cream mixture to 70° . Pour into three warm pint jars and incubate at $68-70^{\circ}$ for 12 to 24 hours. You sacrifice taste for thickness in leaving it longer.

Ice Cream

For two quarts of ice cream, mix 3 beaten eggs, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of warmed honey, 1 tsp. vanilla, pinch of salt, 1 cup cream and 1 quart whole, rich milk. Chill this mixture before putting it in the ice cream freezer and cranking. This is a basic vanilla recipe and it can be elaborated on with two cups of honeyed fruit, chocolate chips, peppermint extract or candy, a cup of cold coffee, etc. etc. ☞



One of the first things I did when I moved to the country was get some chickens, lured, like so many others, by the prospect of fresh, fertile, unamphetaminated eggs, and the bucolic pleasures of overseeing the daily pomp and circumstance of my own flock. Also present was a vivid remembrance of picking out a real, live chicken for Friday dinner with my grandmother, in a New York where the rag-men still made daily rounds in horse-drawn wagons.

It was a while before I could bring myself to butcher any of my chickens, despite the fact that I had enough practical experience and reading behind me to know that four year old hens are a financial liability and at least half of those appealing fuzzy chickies grew up to be blustering roosters that fought constantly, wore out the hens with their non-stop sexual advances, and rarely could be given away, let alone sold. I think the ultimate deciding factor was buying a chicken for dinner which had no dark meat on it, due, no doubt, to its never having set foot on the ground, and which tasted transparent.

Several years and as many unsavory experiences later, I have learned the easiest ways to butcher and clean chickens, which I'd like to pass on to you. Killing a chicken isn't a pansantry, but performing it in the most efficient way possible makes it easier for both of you.

There is one thing I can say about the time-honored head-on-the-block method, and that is, it works. It is also messy, and upsetting to see a deheaded bird flopping around. If you plan to butcher your chickens this way, I suggest you put a paper bag over its head, to minimize the mess.

The way I prefer to kill is by the "English" method, which breaks the neck of the bird. To do this, grasp the legs and tip of the wings in one hand to keep the bird from flopping around, and the head between the thumb and index finger of the other hand. Pull down on the head, stretching the neck, and simultaneously bend the head back sharply to dislocate the neck at the base of the skull. The bird will flutter some, but can be held. When it stops moving, you can behave it and let the blood accumulated in the neck run out.

You can also butcher by suspending the bird upside down at about shoulder height, and slit its throat with a razor or sharp knife, and bleed it into a can, before plucking.

There are several ways to pluck. I prefer to pluck dry, but it has to be done quickly and immediately, before the feather follicles contract and the feathers get hard to pull. First pluck the tail feathers, then the primary wing feathers, one or two at a time, and then the body feathers. The big feathers come out easily by jerking, and the body feathers by a snappy rolling kind of a pull. You should pluck these latter feathers in handfuls, and concentrate on getting the most feathers out in the shortest time, while they are still easy to pull. On some birds the skin will tend to tear more easily than on others - try to tear the skin as little as possible. I've found that tying the bird upside down to a 2x4 nailed between two trees so the bird is about shoulder height, is the easiest way to pluck. It's a comfortable working height, and leaves both hands free to pluck.

For wet-plucking, or "scalding" you need two 2½ gallon buckets, one with hot water (about 180°F) and the other with cold. Immerse the bird in the hot water for a few seconds until the feathers are loose, then dunk it in cold water to avoid cooking the skin - and then pluck. Repeat this until the bird is plucked fairly clean. Then go back and remove feathers you have missed. You can singe the fine hairs and pin feathers off with a gas flame. You can also skin the entire bird, which will remove feathers and skin, in one neat package, if you don't care about losing the skin.

To dress the chicken, cut the feet off at the joint, cut the wings at the joint, and make a slit beneath the breast bone about 1½ inches above the vent. Make a circular cut around the vent, trying not to cut the intestines while pushing them into the body and out through the first cut; remove the gizzard. Then reach into the body cavity and remove the remaining viscera in one intact group (I've never accomplished this). Slit the skin on the back of the neck, remove crop and windpipe from neck skin, and cut off neck close to the shoulders. Remove the two oil sacs, one on the back and one near the tail. Rinse the cavity with cold running water and chill the bird until it is ready to be cooked.

The chicken should not have been fed for 12 hours prior to butchering, which will eliminate a lot of mess should you accidentally cut the crop or intestines. ♀

on our backs

Living in the country has made me acutely aware of my body as a tool. My body feels differently than it used to - I am using and feeling the strength that is there and I know I'm still developing it. I'm also aware, however, that I must work with not against my body to use it to maximum capacity. And so- this article on backs.

Lifting and carrying things is an everyday activity and also one of the easiest ways to strain or throw our backs - possibly causing permanent damage. Some hints; Always bend at your knees and hips, keeping your back as straight and vertical as possible when trying to lift something. This position takes the strain off your back and allows you to use your leg muscles to lift. Reaching over and bending at the waist to lift with your arms is almost a sure way to really strain or pull a back muscle.



Know what your present limits are. It takes time to build up the leg muscles and trying to lift something too heavy for you can cause permanent back damage. If you are not sure how heavy something is and you want to give it a try, start lifting it very gradually. Don't try exerting all your strength abruptly to find out if you can do it alone - the possible penalty isn't worth it. "Last summer, about six of us, men and women, loaded, trucked and stacked in our barn sixteen tons of hay. The men and one woman could maneuver the hundred and fifty pound bales with hay hooks but my method was end-over-ending the bales. When attempting to stack, this method requires two people, working in harmony, so the bale doesn't get off balance. Women can augment their strength by lifting together!"

Keep whatever you're lifting close to your body. Holding something away from you unbalances the weight and puts stress on your back. Any size thing can cause damage if your body is incorrectly positioned. "I injured my back about six years ago, one sunny Sunday afternoon working in my front yard in Los Angeles. I was pulling weeds and not doing it correctly. I was kneeling instead of squatting, reaching forward and pulling hard - way in front of me instead of going closer to the weeds I was working with. It put me out of commission, flat on my back for seven months. A major spine surgery, 36 hospital days, and a permanent set of my very own personal pains - perhaps, forever more!"

It's a good idea to carry balanced loads. "The first summer I was on our land we had to haul water from our spring to the garden

(which was uphill naturally). For awhile I was carrying the water in a six gallon container in one hand. I soon found that I could more easily carry more water by using two containers. Having the weight more equally distributed allowed my body to be better balanced."

Since we can cause or aggravate backache in non-movement as well as when we're moving, it makes sense to be conscious of our positions when standing, sitting and lying down.

What we may feel are sometimes the most "comfortable" sitting or lying positions, may, in fact, be causing us to be in a swayback position (an arch in the lower back, pelvis tilted forward). Swayback puts strain on our back muscles.

Ideally your back should be flattened, and you neck and back in as straight a line as possible with your spine. Body position effects our internal organs - they need enough room to function well and for blood to freely circulate. Sleeping in a swayback position can cause (in addition to backache) numbness and tingling and pain in arms and legs from the poor circulation that that position creates.

Sleeping on your side with your knees bent is a good position since it keeps your back flat. If you sleep on your back you're sleeping in a swayback position - unless you put a pillow under your knees to flatten your back.



Avoid using a high pillow under your head- it strains your neck, arms and shoulders. A firm mattress is definitely better for your back than a "sink into" kind.

"My neck and back would often feel achy after driving. A friend suggested I move the seat closer to the pedals so that I wouldn't be reaching forward with my head! A hard back rest would probably help also.

A straight hard chair is best for your back. And again, your neck and back should be in as straight a line as possible with your spine - and the back flat.

If your back feels tired or sore try taking a rest for at least five minutes, lying on your back with pillows under your knees. This will take pressure and weight off your back and legs. It works!





BUYING GOATS

Most people who buy a goat end up keeping two, three or more. This has to do not just with the sociable nature of goats (for they crave the company of others of their species and usually don't take well to being the only one) but with the special qualities of the goat. An animal that combines independence, cleverness and high productivity, the goat is a valuable addition to the homestead. She (for most goats you keep will be does) has simple needs--a small shed, a pen or pasture, a monthly hoof-trimming and daily fresh water and feed. You will have to be home twice a day to milk her, which is a basic and necessary commitment. Her small size makes her easy to transport in breeding season and easy to handle and house. The initial investment in buying a good goat will come back to you many-fold. The milk she produces (good tasting, and especially nutritious) will easily outweigh the cost of keeping her. Her kids--if you can bring yourself to sell them--will add to her productive value. The most important thing in buying a goat--whether it's your first or your fifth--is to choose her carefully according to your needs and expectations. Love at first sight is not to be discounted...but try to be sensible.

Before you buy a goat, you should learn as much as possible about them and look at many different animals. People who raise goats are usually quite happy to talk with you and show you their animals. Goat magazines and books can teach you a lot--but it comes to life in the animals! We learned more about conformation in the goat by attending one small local goat-show than by reading two years' worth of Dairy Goat Journal! Learn the basics and then go out and look at goats...

There are 5 breeds of dairy goats and infinite varieties of crossbred goats. Saanens, Toggenburgs and Alpines resemble one another in con-

formation (body type). They have medium-sized ears which are held out from the head and rather straight noses. Saanens are pure white and usually large animals. Toggenburgs are "always some shade of brown, with a light or white stripe down each side of the face; legs are white on the inside and white is shown on either side of the tail on the rump." French Alpines are multi-colored, with certain recognized patterns such as cou blanc or cou clair (white, tan or gray neck and shoulders shading to black hindquarters, black markings on head) and Chamoisee (tan, red, bay or brown with black markings on head and neck, black stripe down back and back legs). Nubians have pronounced Roman noses, long floppy ears, and may be any color--from pure white to spotted gray and black. La Manchas may also be any color with small ears (called elf ears) or earless, and straight or dished faces. Crossbred goats may combine these breed characteristics--so that a goat with Toggenburg markings, floppy half-Nubian ears and a slight Roman nose might appear. When you go to buy a goat, take into consideration the breeding bucks in your area. When you go to breed your doe, it should be a careful effort to produce a better kid. You probably won't want to haul her 200 miles to breed with a good buck of the same breed--but you should never breed with the buck down the road just because he's a male. Also buying a goat of the type prevalent in your area will give you a wider choice of animals.

The basic vocabulary of the goat keeper is simple. A female goat is properly a doe. A male is a buck. A castrated buck is a wether. "Kids" range in age from a day to a year--at which point they become "yearlings" (although the young female may be called a "doeling"). When a goat has her kids, it is called freshening--

coming into milk--and her age may be discussed in terms of her number of freshenings. A doe is usually bred at the age of 10 months but this may vary from 7 to 18 months. A "first freshener", then, is anywhere from 12 months to 23 months old. "grade" is the term used for a goat of unknown--or partially unknown--breeding. A purebred animal is one whose ancestors are all of one type. She may or may not be registered. The language of registered and pedigreed goats is more esoteric. Most of the terms--"A.R. doe" or "star buck"--refer to milk production tests and records. You should ask the breeder to explain any terms used, as they can be quite complicated.

Spring is usually the best time to buy a goat. Kids are abundant. Milking does are available. People are culling their herds (selling those animals they no longer want) to make room for special kids. A large number of available goats gives you your choice of animals.

Whether you go to look at a goat advertised on the local bulletin board or to pick one out of a large dairy herd, don't be afraid to ask questions. The economy and pleasure of goat-keeping is related to the productivity, temperament and health of the animal you buy. Because you are buying a dairy animal, you should first consider milk production. It varies tremendously from animal to animal and is largely a result of good or poor breeding. If you are looking at an older doe, ask for production records on her and if possible on her daughters. If you are looking at a doe kid, ask about her mother's (dam's) production and any milking-age sisters. Find out about her father (sire) too--he should be from an excellent doe. If a doe kid comes from a line of good milkers, you can expect her to be good, too. If she comes from a line of unrecorded milkers, you have no way of knowing whether she will be worth her keep (though it is a rare goat who doesn't at least pay her feed bill.)

The most accurate milk records are kept by weight--in pounds and tenths of pounds (one lb. equals approximately one pint; 8 lbs. to the gallon). A normal lactation is 305 days, so if someone says a doe gave "1600 lbs." you assume it was over a 10 month period. The average is important. Some goats will milk very well the first few months and then drop radically. Others will milk consistently, if not spectacularly. If someone says a doe gives "a gallon a day" or "this doe gives 3 quarts," find out how long she's been milking and what her average production is. The first month after kidding, a doe will gradually increase in her milk yield. After that, she should level and hold for as long as possible. Gradually the goat will slack off--and once she's bred (usually after milking 7 months) she may drop a lot. Some goats will milk a year or two without being bred again.

Breed, age and management will greatly affect a doe's production. Saanens, Toggenburgs and Alpines generally give more milk than Nubians and La Manchas. The milk of Nubians and La Manchas has much higher butterfat content so that it is excellent tasting and can be eas-

ily separated for butter, ice cream or sour cream making. An individual animal may be the exception to these general rules: there are heavy-milking Nubians and poor Toggenburgs around. The crossing of two purebred parents usually produces a doe kid of exceptional productivity and strength. A doe that has many cross-breedings in her past, though, is usually not a good goat. Size, vigor and milk production are lost in casual cross breedings. The uniformity of color and type in purebred animals carries with it a uniformity of other dairy characteristics. Good and careful breeding results in good animals. The practice of purebred dairy goats is not just someone's fancy or fetish.

A young doe--first or second freshening--is at the beginning of her milk producing potential. Until age 5 to 7, a doe increases yearly in the amount of milk she gives. She reaches a peak productivity for a few years then begins to decrease. Does may kid and milk to age 12 and some keep producing to 18! The value of an old, proven doe is in the kids she will give you.

The way a doe is kept will greatly affect her production too. A well-fed and healthy goat with an adequate shelter, access to salt and plenty of clean, fresh water, and space to exercise in the sun and fresh air should be milking at her maximum. If the goat looks thin, has a rough coat or appears depressed, look at her surroundings--and her--more carefully. She should be getting high-protein hay (alfalfa is choice) and grain. If she's well-fed and still thin, she may have worms (look at her inner eyelid--paleness indicates worms). If her coat is rough, she may have lice (severe infestations lowers milk production). If her shelter is drafty, she may be putting more energy into






continued

continued

keeping warm than into milk-production. A few weeks of good care (proper feeding, worming, or de-lousing) will restore her surprisingly.

All these things taken into consideration, how much milk does a good goat give? 1500 to 1600 lbs. a year is a credible average for a young goat. Translated into daily production, this is 2 to 3 quarts. Older does should be giving 2000 lbs or more to be considered equally good. There are many dairy goats on record who average 10 lbs. (5 qts.) a day and more. Unless you want to put a lot of money into buying an outstanding doe kid, you should probably settle for the good average milker. By breeding her with an exceptional buck, you may produce those special kids. Also take into account that a doe for sale is usually not the best in the herd.

The goat's conformation is important. Look for strong, straight legs and a deep body (allowing for maximum feed consumption and, correspondingly, maximum production.) The back should be straight. The slope from the pin-bone to tail should be as gradual as possible. This allows for a large and well-attached udder. The udder itself should be shaped as much  as possible like this to give maximum milk. A pendulous udder  may have little capacity and is subject to injuries. A goat with very small teats is hard to milk.

If possible, milk the doe  you are considering buying. She should have large enough holes to milk easily. Don't be put off if she tries to kick you or the milk pail—she may just be reacting to you as a stranger. Even the chronic kicker (and some does are on sale for this very reason) can be cured with patience and gentleness. You should also check to see that there are no hard lumps in the udder. These indicate mastitis—past or present. Mastitis is an infection of the udder which causes fever, lowered milk-production, and other problems. It may be mechanically or bacterially caused. Once a doe has had mastitis, she is more susceptible to getting it again. She may also lose a good part of her udder tissue and never produce well. Generally you should not buy a doe who has or has had mastitis.

If you are looking at a doe kid, you can't tell much about her udder without seeing her mother and/or sisters. Udder type is inherited, remember the influence of the buck too. You can check to see that the kid does not have double teats (an inherited fault). Widely-spaced teats on a doe kid are supposed to indicate a good udder coming.

Prices, like goats, vary greatly. An excellent purebred doe kid may cost from \$100 up. In our area, doe kids sell for about \$20 new born. A doe at 3 or 4 months brings \$30. Registered kids or kids from very good does usually start at \$50. A bred yearling is usually \$50—cheaper if she is crossbred or of mediocre type. Milking does cost from \$50 to \$75 depending upon their age, production and breeding. The bargain goat—" \$20 for a milking nanny" is usually no

bargain. What you save in initial investment you lose in long-term keep. Consider the following:

Assume that it costs about \$8 a month to keep a milking doe (feeding 3 lbs. alfalfa hay and 4 lbs. of grain daily—plus bedding, salt and other incidentals). This is a high estimate. Add in \$10 for the year (for any uncounted extras). \$100 a year to keep her. Milk is valued at \$1 a gallon.

The initial investment for a bargain goat - \$30. She gives an average of 3 lbs. a day, or \$114 worth of milk in a year. She earns her keep plus pays back half your investment. And you have her kids to sell.

A good goat costs, say, \$50 or \$75. If she gives an average of 6 lbs. a day, she produces milk worth about \$228. Pays her keep, repays your investment and then some. And her kids are valuable.

The superior goat - chosen carefully for maximum production and giving at least an 8 lb. average - may cost upwards of \$100. In one year's milking she produces \$405 worth of milk. Pays for herself and her keep twice over. And her kids you won't want to sell...

So the higher price on the better goat is really the bargain, if you can afford it initially.

Buying a kid or pair of kids is a good way to begin if you aren't in a hurry for milk. The price of a really fine kid will equal that of a medium milking doe - and your investment in raising her will pay off in long-term production. By the time she freshens, you will know a lot about goats, their habits and needs.

Whenever you buy an animal, find out specifically what she's been eating, how often she's been fed, and so on. A goat taken from its accustomed place, people and companions gets very homesick. You can minimize the difficulty by providing feed and a routine she's used to. If you want to change her feed, milking schedule, or bottle-feeding in the case of a kid, do it all gradually. Also ask about any problems with her routine care (hoof trimming, extra sensitivity to cold or drafts, etc.). This little added care will make you and the goat happier.

Next issue: Keeping a goat. Simple sheds, milk stanchions, daily care. ☺





I can think of no greater responsibility than that of owning land; being free in the eyes of the law to do what you wish with it. When we first bought our 640 acres I felt it was "ours" only so we could give it back to itself after the rape of loggers and too many sheep. We have about 40 acres of gently sloping meadows and madrone/tan oak/redwood patches and the remaining 600 acres is steep hill country, typical Mendocino County sheep raising land. Now, after living here for a year and a half I have begun to accept that 7 people and their domestic animals do interrupt the wildness, i.e. no matter how much you love a deer, a pounding sledgehammer will drive her away. It is not realistic to think we can become farmers and not make our marks on the land. Therefore, our responsibility to this land is to make these changes in an ecologically sound manner and, wherever possible, help nature heal the wounds of careless men.

I'm going to tell you briefly about one of our activities on this land: planting 10-12 acres of vetch and oats. Our purpose was two-fold: to improve our sparse soil and to begin to feed our animals good organic hay. We have little water, irrigation is out of the question so our first choice crop of alfalfa (good goat feed and excellent for the soil because of its deep roots and nitrogen content) was not possible. The county agricultural agent recommended a 4-1 combination of oats and vetch, a dry dirt crop.

The acres we planted were producing not much more than thistles, sheep sorrel and assorted poverty grasses. Ideally we wanted to lime the entire area but we had waited too long; the rains were threatening and the 20 tons of lime needed couldn't be sure of getting up the mountain and spread. Our choice was to wait a year or to plant without lime. We decided to go ahead and plant, for anything we could grow would help catch moisture and increase the organic material in the soil.

Of course we tried to work out the most economical way of doing the fields. Since our mule is just a year old (and wild at that) we temporarily put away our dream of mule power and resorted to our truck, an old 3/4 ton army weapons carrier with 4 wheel drive. We borrowed our neighbor's disc, with the agreement we would disc a field for him next year, hooked it behind our truck and went over the fields three times. The disc turned the soil over about 6-8 inches deep.

It was both terrifying and beautifully exciting to see the fields turn from burnt gold to the dark brown of churned-up earth. We also felt the sadness of seeing tire tracks over a wishfully abandoned road between the two fields we were planting.

After discing came the seeding. We purchased two hand seeders and spent two days taking shifts seeding. Filling your bag and carrying it from one shoulder, walking to and fro across the pasture, broadcasting seed in a 9 foot diameter semicircle, was an exhilarating experience. After seeding we attached an old harrow behind the disc, set the disc on chop (a setting where the disc rides on top of the soil with minimum penetration), and went over the fields covering the seed as best we could. Even so, huge flocks of ravens and juncos had their Thanksgiving feast at our expense.

We planted at the end of November--too late--for while it was a joy to watch the fields absorb the first rains where previously little water has penetrated the hard clay, the later rains drown seedlings and it is coming up unevenly.

We are women and men living together all consciously working toward a common goal of getting away from sexist division in our work, our life. On this particular project the work load was shared between 5 of us--three men and two women; but most of it was done by one woman and

one man. Each stage of the process, i.e. driving the truck, seeding, harrowing, involved man and woman power. That's as simply as we can reduce all the issues.

Our cost for this venture was \$100 in seed, \$21 for the seeders and \$50 in gas to run the truck. If we had used lime in the amount of 2 ton an acre at a cost of \$11 a ton and \$11 a ton delivery charge, our cost could have been \$440 higher. Planting pasture is definitely a long term investment because a harvest this year would not return our seed and gas costs. Hopefully we

can let these fields rest and nourish themselves for several years before we try to take away any substantial harvest. Vetch is a legume and should be turned under at 18 inches for maximum balance of organic material and nitrogen. We plan to improve our soil to a point where the fields can supply organic animal feed locally. Meanwhile, this new connection with the land feels right and as I sit on the hill and look down to one field, the new seedlings are smiling in this February sun and it feels that there is trust between us. ♀

COUNTRY ♀ WOMEN BENEFIT

It was planned...

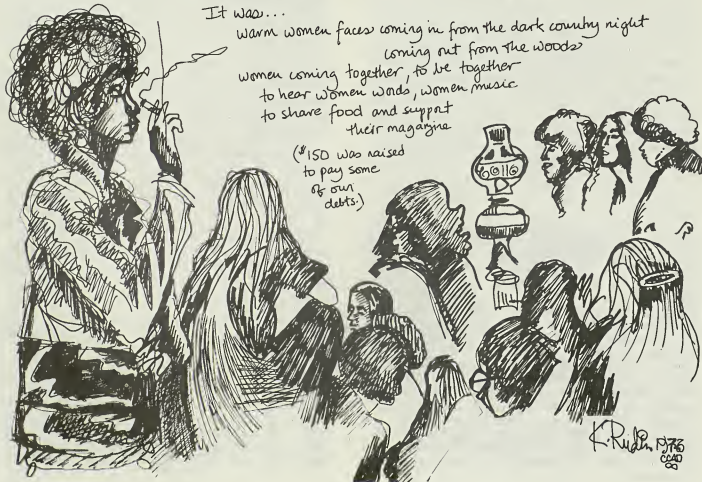
a night of poetry and music just for women, planned by the magazine collective to raise desperately needed money to keep us going.

It was...

warm women faces coming in from the dark country night
coming out from the woods

women coming together, to be together
to hear women words, women music
to share food and support
their magazine

(\$150 was raised
to pay some
of our
debts.)



K. R. R. 1976
C. A. D.



- 1 To Be A Woman...Jean of Mtn. Grove
- 2 Letters From Frog Pond Farm...Anon
- 5 Resources To Help You Homestead...Jeanne Tetrault
- 6 Elegy For Bees...Jean of Mtn. Grove
- 8 One Week From A Homestead Journal...Sherry Thomas
- 11 Fencing...Jeanne Tetrault
- 15 Day of Rest and Farm Records...Jeanne Tetrault
- 16 Poem...Lilo Glozer
- 16 Be Your Own Vet...Jeanne Tetrault
- 17 Poem...Lilo Glozer
- 18 Women's Life At the Garden Of Joy Blues...Catherine Yronwode
- 19 Memoirs Of An Ex Homestead Wife...Harriet Bye
- 21 The Farmer, She...Carmen Goodyear
- Poster - Women In Agriculture - Max
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